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# Human Nature At Work

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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

HUMAN NATURE AT WORK  
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## PREFACE

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The material for this book grew out of case discussions and classes, both individual and group, with executives, particularly those of the training department. Practically all of the illustrations and the case material were contributed by them. One great source of satisfaction to the writer was the evidence of growth in their understanding of human nature and their technique in the handling of human problems.

Personnel work should be a profession, approached with the same appreciation for special knowledge and technique that other professions demand. It is becoming too important a field to be turned over to any good fellow who is likeable and friendly and has a way with people, or, as in many cases, to some nice person who has outlived his usefulness in another department of the business. Nor should industry be content simply with hiring a personnel specialist. Personnel problems will never be solved until every owner and every executive realizes that personnel handling is of equal importance with every other phase of his job.

J. L. S.

New York City



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## FOREWORD

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By WALTER HOVING  
*President of Lord and Taylor*

GREAT progress has been made in many phases of industry in the last several decades. During this time we have seen enormous improvement in the efficiency of production methods, in the understanding of consumer research, in the perfection of advertising, and in the growth of efficient distribution. But, while many of these phases were rapidly progressing, we have not seen similar progress in the important field of personnel.

If American business is to keep its place in industrial development, it can do so only by improved industrial leadership. This means better selection and better training of the industrial leaders of the new era which we are approaching. It means that these executives must have not only an expert and technical knowledge of the mechanics of their jobs, but an equally expert knowledge of the fundamentals governing human behavior.

The careful selection and successful placement of executives is of the greatest importance, and yet this phase of industrial management is often accomplished by the most casual methods. Most executives believe that they are thoroughly competent, with no proper training and little real knowledge, to hire and promote any person into an executive position. To admit that this God-given right should be turned over to

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anyone expert in selection and placement is wounding to their vanity.

The load of industry must be faced and carried by the men and women who hold positions of responsibility in industry. The ultimate objectives must always be to employ more people, to make profits necessary for future growth, and to help improve the general well being of this country.

For these reasons, Mrs. Shepard's book, with its frank discussion of the important question of emotional maturity and its sound scientific approach to the problem of the human equation in business, is like fresh air in a tobacco-laden executive meeting.

New York City

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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THIS book could not be concluded without the author's grateful acknowledgment to Mrs. Ruth Matson for her work as assistant, and to Mr. Jack Straus for his real interest.

I also wish gratefully to mention Mr. Earnest Lawton, Assistant General Manager in charge of Personnel, R. H. Macy's, without whose cooperation the principles contained in this book could never have been worked out.





HUMAN NATURE

AT WORK



## INTRODUCTION

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THE simple facts about John Gordon as they were known to his employers were these: a stock man was needed in the warehouse and the Employment Manager was glad to select Gordon, a fine looking, strong applicant with pleasant Southern manners and an alert, responsible appearance. Three months later John Gordon was promoted. He was placed in charge of three men and his salary increased. Good work earned him a second raise at the end of six months and yet another the following year. He became assistant to the warehouse supervisor. For six years his ratings were "good" and "excellent."

That was the beginning of John Gordon's history. At the end of six years his department was moved to another building and reorganized. John had not realized that the firm had been "grading up" for some time. New men who were considered good material for executive positions were being started in minor posts like his for training. John now found himself under two handicaps; one, it was really difficult for him to compete with the younger, more capable men with whom he was temporarily brought into contact; the other, he was now placed under a forelady, who soon

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began to find fault with him and his management of people. Slowly she deprived him of his supervisory responsibilities and assigned many of his duties to his subordinates. He had never before been criticised for poor work, but now the forelady constantly complained about his attitude and remarked that he seemed over-anxious to leave promptly at closing-time.

Three months later he was called to the employment department where he had never been summoned previously. He was told that the work he was doing would be taken over by others, chiefly by the forelady. His job had been eliminated. The employment office offered to transfer him to another department, although his salary would be cut seven dollars a week. He accepted, and this gave him exactly the same pay at which he had started to work seven years earlier.

John Gordon received good ratings for another six months. Then he suddenly reappeared at the employment office and announced that he had been studying radio mechanics at night school. He asked to be assigned where he could make some use of his knowledge, in the hope that eventually he could earn more. Because of his good record as a stock man, the Office was glad to send him to the radio department at the same salary. He was given a little mechanical work plus his former stock duties. His actual knowledge was found to be slight; so whenever there was a slow period in the department, John was the first to be placed on odd jobs or sent elsewhere. During the summer, he was requisitioned for stock work in another department but was promised that at the end of three months he would be returned and permitted to do more mechanical work. On the temporary stock job

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he displayed more enthusiasm and efficiency than he had shown for some time.

When John was sent back to his job in the radio division, he was put on stock again and occasionally allowed to putter around with the mechanical work he was so anxious to learn. But finally the department manager warned John that he was slow and seemed to lack interest; if he did not perform better, he would be dismissed. This warning was inspired by a complaint from his immediate foreman, who was watching John's work with visible dissatisfaction. A few days later John went to the Employment Office to talk over his problem, but too late. The Office had received a report on John Gordon: "Recommended for lay-off. Slow, not suited to work now required; not as fast or intelligent as people with shorter length of service in the department; good attitude but lackadaisical; seems to lack enthusiasm."

John Gordon was accordingly dismissed.

Two things were outstanding about John Gordon's record. He had started as an able worker and won two promotions and three salary increases. At the end of ten years, there seemed no alternative but to let him go. His responsibilities had been decreased and his request for a transfer granted, yet his performance was increasingly more inexpert and his interest duller. A new personnel officer read this history. His curiosity was challenged. John Gordon had already left, but he was sent for and asked to tell his story. The new personnel officer was not satisfied with hearing what had happened to John Gordon since he had entered the service ten years ago. His interest extended to an account of John's earlier life, a description of his home and ambitions.

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Thirty-six years before, John Gordon had been born to a family of Georgia farmers, the eldest of three sons and the apple of his mother's eye. She centered on him all the hopes which his father had failed to realize. She had been a bright girl who had graduated from high school and taught in her home town in New York State, before she went to visit relatives in Georgia, where she met and married the good-looking Southerner who became John's father. Beside his attractive person, he gave her little except three strong sons. The Gordons were always farmers, and after they lost their home place, they became tenant farmers, which is not a happy life.

The boys went to school and worked with their father before and after school hours and during summer vacations. Their father, who had always lived on a farm, did nothing much about education one way or the other, but their mother was forever working and finding something to do so that the boys could continue at their lessons. She never wavered in her determination that John must have a chance, and although the financial pull was a long, hard one, she accomplished it somehow and John graduated from high school when he was twenty. Then for a year he was assistant school teacher, having the first six grades in grammar school.

That the mother was the dominant personality in John's home was shown by her behavior when his brother William married at the age of seventeen and went to live with his in-laws on a farm in Tennessee. His mother objected vigorously to the marriage and wanted to keep the boy at home, but the youngster's determination was a match for hers. He went through with his plans although it estranged his mother for two or three years. Later she put aside this

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estrangement with an equal display of strong will and re-established a satisfactory family relationship with William, becoming very proud of his only child, a little girl, and the family was united once more.

When John was twenty-one, he left teaching to find more remunerative work elsewhere, hoping to further his education at the same time. In doing this, he was only trying to carry out his mother's plans for him, those ambitions that she had always held up to him as ideals, but his departure nearly broke his mother's heart. He soon sent her money as evidence that he was well and flourishing, and continued this for fifteen years although he did not see her again during all that period.

For the first year John roamed about the country. He liked travel and enlisted in the Navy to see the world and take advantage of the educational opportunities offered to enrolled men. He hoped then, with simple masculine selfishness, that by continuing his travels and improving himself, he would find a girl with money enough to keep him in funds so that he could go through college and travel again. Starting in the Navy as an apprentice yeoman, he progressed rapidly and was promoted three times within three years. Finally he was made first-class yeoman. He enjoyed his work, learned much and had a lot of fun. John earned the respect of all on board and was well liked by his superiors, associates, and subordinates. After four years in the Navy, he married a Spanish woman three years his senior. While he finished the final years of his service, she continued to live with her parents in South America. She spoke very little English and he knew nothing whatever of Spanish. He continued igno-

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rant of his wife's native tongue, while she never progressed far in his, her speech remaining very broken.

Soon after his discharge from the Navy, he and his wife came to New York to find work. Jobs were plentiful in those halcyon days. He was taken on at the warehouse, where his good appearance and smart manner, impressed on him by naval discipline, were readily appreciated. As he advanced in salary and position, he won the respect of his fellow employees; he liked them and his work, and the recognition he received was gratifying.

Conditions at home were not as satisfactory. His wife, who was quite an excitable person, did not like living in New York. Her unrest expressed itself in their changing apartments about every three months. A little girl was born two years after their marriage. Then his wife, having an interest at home, became more reconciled to being shut up in a little flat without the garden and sunshine to which she had been accustomed. She tried hard to make a go of things and was encouraged by his promotions and pleased with his promise to build a home in the country where she could work in the garden. She especially liked gardening and felt that the little girl, who was not well, needed more sunlight. His wife's preoccupation with the child, while it freed him from some vexations, made John feel somewhat pushed aside. This was a new experience because his own mother had centered her affection on him, even after she had other babies. Still, having relinquished his search for the youthfully envisioned girl who could finance him, he felt that he had done well to avoid the young, frivolous type of wife and select one with so many characteristics that reminded him of his mother. His wife also had ambition and was



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thrifty, for without her help surely he could not have saved four hundred dollars from his small weekly salary besides sending his mother a monthly allowance. Finally the Gordons seemed well on the way toward realizing their hope of a home in the country, when they invested their savings in partial purchase of a lot, on which they were to continue monthly payments.

The removal of John's sector in the warehouse to another building, where it was consolidated with another department, did not alarm him. The forelady was the first woman under whom he had ever worked, but the relation that had existed between his mother and himself and later with his wife, who was older than he, helped him to adjust himself very easily. He got along well and the quality of his work did not alter, until the forelady became enamored of him. He had to tell her that he did not care to be her "boy friend." Like Potiphar's wife, the forelady sought to revenge herself on John; she took spiteful steps to reduce his responsibilities, complained about him, and did whatever she could to make his way hard. He realized his danger and decided to prepare himself. He wanted to earn more to build the new home and sought for something that would help him make extra money at night. His mother had impressed upon him the desirability of schooling. Radio was being much advertised as a promising trade, and John paid eighty-five dollars for a night school course, thinking that he would also be ready for another job if things came to a head in the department, as indeed they did in the following three months. His job was eliminated. The competition of the new junior executives prevented him from finding another position like the one he had held. As he had not finished the radio course

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for which he had paid the considerable sum of eighty-five dollars, he had to accept the Employment Office's offer of a demotion with its important salary reduction.

Gordon was afraid to go home and tell his wife. When she learned of the transfer she became excited and angry and insisted that he should go back and relate the story of the forelady. He refused. Perhaps it was mistaken chivalry,<sup>c</sup> or perhaps more wisely he felt that a complaint would not help him at all, since his story would probably not be believed. Unfortunately, he could not foresee that in another three months the forelady would be considered totally unfit for other reasons and herself discharged.

The reduction in salary brought about many alterations in the life of the Gordon family. They had to economize in humiliating ways, for they dared not fall behind in paying monthly installments on the lot, in which were invested all their past savings. John was forced to give up night school and they found cheaper quarters. His wife was not satisfied, and once more they began to move from place to place. John's father had died; his mother was left alone. His second brother, who had continued to work on the farm for nine years, had now joined the Navy. William was on his own farm in Tennessee. John worried about his mother and often wondered whether he should ask her to come to New York, but was afraid his wife might not like it. He eased his conscience by his faithful monthly remittance, although sometimes it was hard to spare anything.

These many distractions did not interfere with John's steady work as a stock man. Once more he made a good impression, and he was quick to take advantage of this; for with the interruption of his slight schooling as a radio

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mechanic, his only hope of improving himself was to put into practice somewhere the costly mechanical theory he had barely mastered. But when his hope was realized and he found himself in the desired department, John soon discovered that he had selected radio mechanics as a trade with a future only because it was new, without considering whether he had any special aptitude. Without thought of his inadequate preparation, he had obtained a job where he had to hold his own in most unequal competition with expert mechanics of long training. The department was fully staffed, and when the work was slack, he began to realize that in the event of lay-offs, the better mechanics would naturally be kept and he would be the first to go. The unsettling and destructive fear of insecurity began to affect him. He worried more and more, because he could not afford to lose his job. That would mean the loss of his savings too, and then his home life would be unbearable. Worry became a constant companion and everything had to be kept from his wife. This explained the many fluctuations in his performance. He improved when he received the last temporary transfer to stock in another department because he felt that for three months at least his job was safe.

But when those three months were up and he was sent back to the radio division, fear returned. His inexperience, which made him seem inferior to the others in the trade, his inability to cope with the demands of the department and the uncertainty hanging over him, caused him relentless anxiety. He became conscious that his foreman was watching him, although the man said nothing. The foreman's vigilance frightened him, and his work grew worse. Then came the department manager's warning.

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The Employment Office saw no way of controverting their carefully kept records. John Gordon was discharged.

John Gordon's story touched a sensitive spot. It proved that a simple card record of job performance was hardly enough to equip a personnel officer. The history was a tragic one similar to thousands of others suffered daily by the little man at the bottom, seldom perceived by the man near enough to the top to correct the mistakes in management that are to blame. While the actual personal distress is individual, the effect in an organization is cumulative. Nationally, it spells tremendous economic waste. But let us return to John Gordon. He had put in ten years of his time and at the end had progressed no further economically than where he had started. Instead, he found himself even less well equipped mentally and emotionally for the task of providing for his family and himself in the future. He promised to become a welfare problem.

Whose was the fault? There is no avail in blaming BIG BUSINESS or talking about the higher executives as though they harmed the little people on purpose. What was needed to guide John Gordon through the apparently simple and yet actually subtle circumstances that were determining his failure, was time and a more scientific understanding of human ways. John Gordon's employers appreciated that. Their workers numbered eight thousand, and was it not possible that in one way or another John Gordon's story might be multiplied by that figure? They saw that a different and fuller approach was needed in the handling of such problems.

The material for this book has been drawn by the author

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from eight years' observation at R. H. Macy and Company, where are followed the valuable findings first laid down by Dr. V. V. Anderson and since incorporated in the work of the R. H. Macy Conference Office. Although the principles should be applicable to any organization, large or small, Macy's has been especially favorable for a study such as this because of an enlightened willingness on the part of the management to pioneer along lines new to industry, and to consider that personnel work should be measured by standards no less exact than would be applied to any other department.

This is not an attempt to depict Macy's as the one paradisaical spot on earth for workers. A small span of years is hardly enough to study so many thousands of employes, especially when there have been so many changes in their ranks and scientific personnel work is relatively new. Nor does it follow, although the merits of the psychiatric point of view in personnel are conceded and supported by the management and are applied in the selection of all executives, that all the executives themselves understand and use the same principles in dealing with the employes directly under them. It is possible by courses, by case conferences, and by individual treatment, to give executives a workable knowledge of mental hygiene. But with hundreds of executives, it cannot be expected that even those who have attended to an exposition of such ideas are at all times in accord with them, or will always avail themselves of the technique and get perfect results. They are like so many of us who agree with the tenets of a religion and yet err daily. This does not detract from the value of the ethical principles which are professed but not practiced. Human nature is that way. It is realized that many

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of the executives not only handle their people badly but have not the slightest idea that they are in any way responsible for the inharmonies that result.

There is no definite formula that can be used for individual employes in each and every situation. One medicine or compound will not work with all people. Mental and emotional factors are unpredictable. But much can be done by the supervisor who has sympathy and liking for his fellow-workers, together with natural tact and a certain good humor and objectivity about himself. Such men are badly needed in every business.

One cannot help another by saying, "You have so and so the matter with you, and I am going to do this and that to improve you." The human mind is completely able to fight such forcible feeding. Strangely enough, even the weakest individual seems to have a passive resistance stronger than any outside force. Human nature cannot be made coöperative or good, happy or successful, by any witch's brew. The prescription has to be made up fresh for each person, which can be done by remembering that knowledge is a slow growth and wisdom is applied knowledge.

The established custom is first to test a curative system in laboratories and clinics. Probably no one could ask for a better clinic than R. H. Macy and Company for a trial of the practical applicability of psychiatric principles to industry in general. A large department store draws its personnel from all classes, and this one has reached out to the whole country and to Europe for its staff. One can face the challenge of sceptics among executives who might say, "Your ideas work with office employes, but not with drivers." "Yes, that plan is fine for sales clerks, but my problem is dealing with factory workers." These principles have been tried with all groups

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and successfully, in a store which is so big that it is a miniature world.

As we read the social and personal records of people, we appreciate that in their early history, education, and experience they represent a cross section of American life. Although no real names are used and the data is disguised sufficiently to avoid embarrassment to anyone—some of the examples are drawn not from Macy's but from the author's experiences elsewhere—pertinent facts are not distorted. The story of John Gordon is a true one.

From banking to bedspreads, from real estate to radio consoles, from a European diplomatic school to house furnishings, from an official position in Czarist Russia to haberdashery, from interior decoration and magazine writing to measuring off a yard of this or that, from movie pianist at college to a job in the basement, from the memory of a dead baby to a place behind a counter where a mother could keep busy enough to forget, from a house to which no baby came, to a factory where the whirl of sewing machines drowned out the longing for the sounds of a real home, day after day this kaleidoscope of human drama passes through the industrial world.

Something about the very size of this organization acts as a powerful magnet to attract people from every walk of life from far and near. Some depend upon its size and power to give them a greater sense of stability. They unconsciously identify themselves with this power and so gain a feeling of prestige. Or they approach from a more realistic point of view and conclude that here are permanent jobs for those who make good in a thoroughly solvent big business. Others want the training and though they may fit better into a smaller place, they believe it will help in job hunting else-

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where to have been a graduate of a large, well-known organization.

Should these people be in merchandising or in operating? Are they potential executive material, and if so, where can they develop best? How can they be helped to understand their own personalities and those of their fellow workers? Are their needs for personal adjustment simple enough so that they can learn to understand and work out their own problems on the job? Are fundamental difficulties so deep-rooted that they cannot recognize them, causing a need for adjustment which would be too costly for industry to attempt? Are we utilizing all that this person has to give as his share, all that he owes to society, to those who employ him, to himself?

The individual as he presents himself for work is the sum, the product of his life's experiences. He is someone with well-defined social and personal needs and habit patterns that he has devised to fill those needs. Certain of these needs, love and those connected with close personal relationships and recreation, are normally fulfilled outside of his working environment. A great many men and women, however, finding these outlets closed to them on the outside have to compensate for them through their work, so that the problems of their adjustment in relation to their needs are increased. Industry, on the other hand, is a rigid reality to which the individual must adjust and measure up under pain of failure. The industrial set-up under the necessity of production and profit cannot be flexible nor can it be expected to be. What flexibility is possible must come in the handling and the understanding of the individual and in helping him to make his adjustment more easily.

To that end, this study is dedicated.



## THE HIRING INTERVIEW

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ONE can over-simplify the case of John Gordon. Indeed, one should not assume that with the aid of psychiatric analysis all personnel problems can be solved at the beginning. This presupposes that human nature is static and not dynamic. John Gordon was certainly the right man at the time he was taken on. In an organization where hundreds and even thousands are hired annually, the selection of the average worker is made on the basis of an employment interview which must necessarily be superficial. Only afterwards is the value of sympathetic and scientific personnel supervision demonstrated.

This does not mean that many of the more obvious difficulties may not be detected in even a brief conversation, so that maladjusted applicants may be weeded out. There are first the unemployables who should be handled by social agencies rather than by industry. Some of them need medical care. Dr. Anderson, in an interesting brochure, has listed the chief physical and psychological ailments from which applicants may be suffering, and the signs by which they may be recognized: those with nervous and mental disorders, sufferers from chronic alcoholism, those with thyroid deficiencies

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or dementia praecox, manic depressives, all of them unable to compete in normal business. The salutary custom in many large industrial organizations today is to require that all new employes submit themselves to a physical examination. The practical benefits of this have been amply proved, and the examination should be recurrent. The worker's mental attitude is never dissociated from his good health, and many a clerical error has been found to result from eye-strain corrected by new glasses, or from some other physical disability similarly in need of attention.

The detailed investigation of the applicant's health lies beyond the field of the hiring interview, just as do the results obtained from the "psychological tests" that are today so popular as measuring rods of intelligence. A word of warning about the "psychological test" is pertinent here. The test reveals much about the applicant's mental capabilities, but tells very little about his likely performance. High intelligence is not always a promise that its possessor will prove a good worker. Assign a very intelligent man to the wrong job and he may fail more quickly than his duller rivals. The "psychological test" betrays nothing of whether the applicant has a normal share of persistence, whether he is emotionally mature, a "good mixer," whether he has any of a dozen other attributes required in the position he seeks. The "test," like the physical examination, supplies the interviewer with illuminating information; what follows is much more important.

John Gordon was physically fit and mentally alert. When this was known about him, the interview was considered closed at the moment that it really should have begun. Much could have been learned about John Gordon from the start

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that would have prevented the errors in placement that brought about his downfall. It might have been learned that John Gordon's capabilities were limited, that he was not mechanically inclined nor fitted for saleswork. The story of his early life should have suggested that he was patient at learning but not likely to be successful in applying his knowledge—otherwise a young man who set out to be a school teacher would not have ended by joining the Navy. There were hints, in his description of his mother's dominant personality and in his marriage to a woman older than himself, that he preferred to accept direction from others and consequently in himself was not destined for any important supervisory position. Something of his financial circumstances should have been known, so that allowance could have been made for the mental distractions that caused his erratic job behavior. But in John Gordon's early history were also revealed the elements of loyalty to his home and a manly ambition that could easily have been transferred to loyalty to his employer and a steadfastness on the job that would have resulted in their mutual profit. Both were the losers.

To have learned these important facts about John Gordon, the interviewer needed no ordinary skill, and at the same time he must not have been too aware of his own skill. Like the artist who spends years acquiring his craft, he would make use of it unconsciously when the right moment arose.

As we shall see, an interview requires a definite technique that is all-important to the employer. He will use it in all his relations with those who work with him. The interview may be formal, as when he is hiring someone, or informal, as when he is offering criticism or merely listening to complaints, but at all times he must be aware that any result he hopes to get

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must be based on his skillful use of this means of communication. There are several kinds of interviews and we shall examine them in the chapters to follow.

The very derivation of the word "interview" is "to see between, to have a glimpse of." That meaning could not be more exact. The interviewer's vision is unhappily limited at all times; he can glimpse only a small part of the person whom he is encountering. No matter how frank and open that person may be, the actual allotment of time makes it impossible for the interviewer to get a total picture of his personality. Moreover, the person interviewed tends to offer for inspection only that side of himself which he considers appropriate under the circumstances. Often this is done quite innocently, in response to his conception of what concerns the particular interview; sometimes he deliberately tries to keep the interviewer in the dark.

A less tangible obstacle to clear vision lies within the interviewer himself. He sees his subject through the medium of his own personality, feelings and emotions, and the picture is thereby colored or obscured. The male employer, for example, is naturally apt to be influenced by feminine pulchritude in his choice, but if a girl happens to have some characteristic which reminds him of his mother-in-law or a teacher who punished him, he may turn her down without knowing why. The boy from college, or a young fraternity brother, may seem especially good material to another employer because he is seen through that golden haze of the memory of college years. The boy, by this subtle process of identification, becomes promising not because of qualities truly his, but simply as the embodiment of the employer's own youthful hopes and ambitions. But again, the interviewer may unwittingly associate this

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same young man with some unpleasant emotion such as being outrivalled in the classroom. Then the boy will not get the job. The element of chance plays havoc with many careers by deflecting them thus unreasonably.

This lack of objectivity in a hiring interview, in the long run, will show unfavorable results, like any other error in business judgment. The successful interviewer studies how to sort out the emotional coloration in his own reactions and in his judgment of the person interviewed. He distrusts hunches. He insists on relating his judgment to what the job-seeker has actually said or done, and to the way he has acted in the interview. If he cannot connect his judgment to a fact, he immediately looks within himself for an explanation. One executive was able to trace his impulse to reject an applicant by thinking over what had made him take an instant dislike to the man. He pinned it down to the applicant's nervous tapping on the arm of his chair, "just the way my father used to tap on the desk when he was lecturing me for misbehaving." When this personal association was set aside, the executive was able to look objectively at the applicant, but now he searched for any other signs of a nervousness which might make the man ill-suited to a position subject to constant pressure, since that would be a more legitimate objection.

There can be no doubt that some people have a "knack" for interviewing, and many highly successful men attribute their good fortune to an instinct for choosing the right assistants. An analysis of this seeming gift will usually bring to light that these men are objective, able to keep themselves in the background and concentrate on the other fellow, and that they have a quick ability to sum up personality from indications which appear in surface behavior. Others gather

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their skill from long practice. Even the most gifted will find it better, however, to know what they are doing and why and how, rather than to trust entirely to intuition.

An air of solemnity is apt to settle over a hiring interview. That is always regrettable. There are several things that a hiring interview is not. One is a duel of wits; another a lecture; another an argument. Remembering this, it is perhaps possible to mitigate some of the discomfort experienced by at least one of the participants, and sometimes by both, by regarding the meeting simply as a conversation between two people for a purpose which is clearly in mind. Even so, the job-seeker naturally feels at a disadvantage, or under strain; and since the sympathetic interviewer will be conscious of this and thereby share something of the other's mental distress, he cannot hope that the meeting will be successful until he has set both the applicant and himself at ease. The atmosphere must be one in which both can act as naturally as possible; privacy is essential and minimizes the applicant's feeling of being under observation. Without it, the responses of the person interviewed are more or less colored by his reaction not only to questions but to the other person or persons present. Security from interruption is also necessary. Secretaries who scurry in and out, telephones that ring incessantly, are more than merely irritating incidents; they definitely break the continuity of the interview. The job-seeker grows to feel that he is working against time, and his responses lose the nuance and detail that should helpfully characterize them.

The interviewer himself is not an invisible deity who can spy upon the thoughts of the person before him. He is a visible presence whose behavior and attitude have a definite

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effect upon the man confronting him. This will materially affect the answers produced by his questions, but rare is the employer self-conscious enough to make allowances for the effect of his own personality.

The simplest way for the interviewer to put his subject at ease is by a transfer of interest from himself to the person whose story he has turned to hear. So doing, he himself is certain to be at ease. He has forgotten his own concerns, consciously directing his thoughts to the matter at hand. His example of poise is the best reassurance, as contagious as its lack, and as the interviewer gains it, he will find the subject relaxing too.

John Gordon, let us suppose, entered the office. The welcome he received was a simple, natural one. The most pleasant thing for John Gordon was that he was not made to feel the interviewer's superior position. The man behind the desk was obviously trying to bridge the gap between himself and John by a ready smile, for they were strangers, but he did not greet John by making a little speech, nor did he await a job-seeker with an attitude of omniscience. This was because the man was interested in learning as quickly as possible all that he could about John,—he had many other applicants to interview that day. He was concerned with the business at hand, just as John was. If he had tried to make an impression, John would have sensed it at once. There is no one so simple that he cannot see when his superior is unsure of himself. John had met with a sufficient number of officious and cocky ensigns in the Navy to know the type when he met it thereafter in civilian life. He would never have taken into his confidence a man who attempted to set himself on a pedestal. He could

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guess that his employer did not feel secure if there were evidences of a defensive vanity; just as a man advertises that he has been threatened if he appears with a bodyguard. The man behind the desk was simply there performing his duty in a friendly way. Perhaps he was not even behind a desk. . . .

One executive said he always sat at his desk and wondered why the people on the other side were so ill at ease, although he did nothing consciously to put them at a disadvantage. In truth, his manner was irreproachable. Being confident himself, he was inclined to think that those who were not, betrayed a potential lack of the qualities that explained his success. One day he happened to be engaged in the center of his office and found that, without his position behind the desk, that symbol of authority, he was not himself. Something was missing from his usual comfort and security.

This interested the executive so much that he decided to try the experiment of giving the other fellow a chance on an equal footing. He remodelled his office, making it a simple living-room with a small sofa, comfortable chairs, tables placed for convenience, but no desk. He met everyone directly as man to man, and was gratified at the spontaneous expression and exchange of ideas that resulted. He often wondered whether any of those interviewed there realized why they were unusually at ease, feeling as though they were talking to a genial host rather than to an autocrat traditionally enthroned.

"From your accent, Mr. Gordon, I presume that you are a Southerner."

"That's right," said John, pleased at this opportunity to



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start talking and still be able to look around and take stock of his surroundings. "From Georgia."

That was the first thing the interviewer wanted to know. "Your family still lives there?"

"My mother," said John, and in a moment he had easily and gladly given a brief picture of his early history, his reasons for leaving home, his experiences in the Navy,—the interviewer had expressed a natural but restrained interest in these last.

"I almost joined the Navy myself when I was twenty-one!"

That put John and the man behind the desk in accord. From the interviewer's manner, John realized that they were not wasting time, that these questions had been asked for a purpose and that they were rapidly coming to the point. Otherwise he would have resented any probing into his private affairs. But instead, he felt this an opportunity to show himself in full, and to someone who would count everything in his favor. He was proud of his Naval record. His marriage explained the reason for his not reënlisting and his present search for a new and better occupation. To the question of whether his wife too was seeking employment, John revealed the circumstance of her nationality and her inability to speak a passable English, and from the slight impatience in his tone as he mentioned this, the interviewer could take note mentally that at some future time there might be distractions in John Gordon's home life. That would be none of his concern, unless it should affect Gordon's work, but he adjudged him mature and realistic enough to warrant confidence. Then too the Navy would have taught him unwavering discipline on the job.

"May I ask if you would expect to contribute to your parents' support?"

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"Yes," answered John. "I have always done so since I left home. My mother helped me get my education. She is a wonderful woman. I owe everything to her."

The interviewer now knew enough about John Gordon's financial circumstances, when he dovetailed this in his mind with an estimate of the probable future limits of the applicant's earning power, to decide whether the position open would allow this former sailor to meet his proper responsibilities. John Gordon had also betrayed that undue emphasis on education that was to lead him to reliance on the radio course, although seemingly he had taken little advantage of the hard-won benefits that had come his way—since in this time of plentiful jobs he was applying for a stock man's position. He had identified his mother as the dominant influence in his existence, and he had shown himself the possessor of the endearing qualities of loyalty and respect in his relation to her. His marriage to a Spanish woman while he was still in the Navy with no definite financial prospects indicated him as liable to act unwisely.

From all this, the interviewer had material enough to help him in guiding John Gordon through many future years, if he could keep alive and fresh his liking and sympathy for the man. Half of John Gordon's battle had been fought and won.

Only that was not the interviewer John Gordon met. Whether he will ever meet him remains a question. But if he should, he will have ten years that culminated in seemingly inexplicable failure to add to his story.

Many of the principles involved in this new conception of the rôle played by the personnel office or officer show them-

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selves in the hiring interview. Limited and hasty though the conclusions may be (and this bears reiteration), there is nevertheless a demand for alertness, for tact, for open-mindedness and genuine interest in reaching them, and these same qualities will be called upon in every aspect of personnel work. John Gordon should exemplify that a formula would not suffice. The applicant who followed John Gordon might be very different. His background might be wholly different, he might be shrewd where John Gordon was confiding, strong where John Gordon was weak, weak where John Gordon was strong. A poker face would never lead him to betray himself. He might be of superior calibre, as interested in sizing up the interviewer as the interviewer in adjudging him. But only in an atmosphere free from artificial restraint, in privacy, with the interviewer encouraging the applicant by granting him more than perfunctory attention, will some part of the truth be exposed. The so-called taciturn manner of watchful waiting adopted by many employment interviewers has about the same practical value as inviting a salesman to show his line and then refusing to let him have any light to display his samples.

What will always be required is sufficient imaginative sympathy to put oneself in the other man's place. "As the other fellow comes into my office, I step into his shoes, cross the floor with him, think what he is thinking about, and feel what he is experiencing." There is another rule of some value: the interviewer who does most of the talking comes out of the interview knowing just about what he knew before.

Coupled with the hiring interview is the problem of job analysis. There is need to discover much about John Gordon,

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but it is also essential to know something about the job which he is expected to fill.

If industry claims the right to select its own workers, it has a corresponding obligation to place, train and equip, and handle its employees so that they can adequately perform that which they were hired to do.

This calls for study by the interviewer. The mechanical and technical requirements of the job must be analyzed, the range of duties specified. This is followed by an accurate estimate of the mental and emotional attributes the position requires.

A position for a lady store detective was open. The personnel department made a careful summary of what sort of person was wanted, in view of what her work would be. It was a task that would demand much patience and an unflagging alertness. Days might pass during which nothing would happen. Only certain types could resist the monotony and never relax vigilance. When thefts were detected, the watcher's rôle must instantly change to one of quick action and thinking, coolness and tact. The store's representative should be personable and able to make a good impression in a court trial. To stand on her feet all day and mingle with crowds, the woman would need to be hardy. With these considerations, a list was drawn up and given to interviewers who met hundreds of applicants.

The list read: "The desirable store detective will be extroverted (outgoing), objective, without very obvious personal problems, and certainly without family troubles that would be likely to claim her thoughts. She would be neither impulsive nor excitable, but would have demonstrable resource, courage, adaptability, patience. Her intelligence quo-

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tient should be above average, her vision and color vision must be good, and especially her memory for faces. She must be one who can assume responsibility, whose interest in the work will be abiding, based in part upon an understanding of people, more than her share of curiosity, a distinct adventuresomeness. Someone with a fair amount of education is preferable, but no one too ambitious, since the job is not one with any promise of promotion."

To these qualifications, the interviewers added others, compiling a model report of many pages when the interviews were finished. The report provides fascinating reading. The surprise was how many women measured up, even when the requirements in this special test were so stringent.

The applicants were tested for speed and accuracy. The job was analyzed again. Now some were rejected because of youth or age, or because they were too lady-like, or because their happy family life unsuited them for coping unsentimentally with habitual or impulsive shop-lifters. The woman chosen was already employed in the store, one who lived alone and preferred to work by herself. Her manner and judgments showed an abundance of realistic common sense. Fortunately in appearance her features were not sufficiently marked so that they were memorable. Her history was one of self-reliance.

This woman had never done detective work before, but she possessed the qualities that the interviewers believed suited her for the job. She had not applied voluntarily, but had been summoned from behind a counter in a department where she was doing saleswork. Her new task soon pleased her. She was eminently successful.

The results also pleased the personnel office. This was an

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example of job analysis finally giving them so clear a picture of the person they wanted, that having summoned her from memory, they recognized there was no need for them to look outside the store.

The job cannot be seen by itself.

An office worker was to be employed. Mary Smith applied from her school bringing a letter stating that she had completed the business course with good grades and behavior. Her record was definitely set forth. Another applicant was Alice Jones who had worked for nine firms in a year and a half. Jean Coles had held one position for nine years until the death of her employer. All three had the requisite speed, accuracy and reference as to character. They were pleasant looking, suitably dressed and had agreeable manners and speech. Which should be chosen?

The interviewer knew that some might object to the girl who had so many jobs as one whom nobody would keep, and that would give Alice a black mark. Another might think that to have held one job for nine years was in itself a gilt-edged recommendation for Jean. As for Mary Smith, just from business school, opinions might vary greatly; some firms welcome the bright beginner, others do not.

The interviewer did not take a great deal of time to delve into the past experiences of the applicants. He already had a picture in advance of the person for whom he was searching, and this enabled him to shorten the hiring process, looking merely for relevant material. He broke the ice simply with a pleasant smile and an air of attentive interest. He kept his approach flexible without losing directness, using the scanty

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information provided by the written application blank as a point of departure.

Jean came first. The interviewer observed her carefully, bearing in mind that this was the girl with the longest period of employment to her credit. In terms of reëmployment, what might her long tenure of one job mean? Would she be adaptable to a new environment, after so long in the old? Would she easily learn new methods and procedure? Would she think she knew it all, because of her long experience; would she be critical, resentful of direction? These were the special questions which the interviewer had to frame for Jean alone. The answer lay in the girl's personality.

The conversation began with a remark which the interviewer hoped would lead into Jean's talking about what her previous job had meant to her: "You must have been pretty well satisfied with your former employer to have stayed with him so long." Jean, who had been sitting quietly, hands folded, waiting for the interview to start, moved in her chair, her face alight. "Oh yes. We were just like one big family." The interviewer showed interest and remained silent to see what Jean would say next. "He was a wonderful man." This was a clue to follow; Jean's shy admiration gradually revealed that her former employer had been a dominating influence in her life, a man of the patriarchal type who liked to feel that his employes were dependent upon him. He had moulded Jean's political opinions and her taste in books. Apparently without the slightest attempt at coquetry, she dressed in the way that he considered pleasing. When she had started to work, she found that he did not care to have her pick up business acquaintances or run around with the boys in the building. He would not have liked his daughters to do such

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things. The undertone of respect and wistfulness in Jean's description of his qualities indicated that it had been no conscious deprivation to her to settle down to pleasing this "father person."

The interviewer's question as to whether this had been her only job revealed that it was: Jean had gone from high school to secretarial school, upon the advice of her mother and their family physician—her own father had died when she was small—and she had obtained her job through her pastor, who had been "almost like a father" to her.

There were evident here two more father-substitutes in Jean's background, and there was suggested in her recital a willingness to lean on the older generation that denoted a pattern of emotional dependence. It looked to the interviewer as though Jean's job had taken on the protected atmosphere of home, and that years of technical experience had only served to nurture no desire on her part to break away. This interpretation that Jean was emotionally a nice, dutiful child, was corroborated by little things in her manner: the quiet way in which she had waited for the interviewer to make the first move, and then her quickness to take the opening afforded; her shy, almost deferential way of speaking; her studious precision in the use of words and a slightly exaggerated air of refinement. The interviewer concluded that Jean, whatever her technical equipment, would need to be placed under another "parent person" if the machinery of her life were to function smoothly.

Alice swept into the room with an appraising eye and, seeing her application card in the interviewer's hand, said smilingly, "I seem to be piling up a record as a job loser or a pinch hitter." The interviewer remarked that apparently



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she had been in a good many different places recently. Almost before the sentence was finished, Alice explained with a rush. She was sent out by one or two agencies whenever there was a call for extra help, because she would take anything. She knew that some girls did not accept a job below a certain wage, preferring to live on their savings between times and keep up their practice. Alice thought she might as well be paid something for practicing, and she also thought it a good idea to meet all types of people and learn about different kinds of business. She had grown up in a Southern town where her family knew everybody, but New York had all sorts and a girl could certainly learn a lot. She had to use her wits if she wanted to get anywhere. Down home her brother used to say, "I can't be bothered having to knock a fellow down for trying to get fresh with one of my sisters. There are too many of you, so the sooner you learn to take care of yourselves, the better. Anything else is pre-War anyway." Of course, he never let Papa hear him say so. Papa would probably have said that "the War between the states made things very difficult for the ladies of our family." He had read about another war since, but he did not know that ladies were abolished then.

The interview with Alice conducted itself. The interviewer, who until now had not said a word, was about to interrupt and guide the conversation into channels which might indicate whether Alice was essentially a rolling stone, when Alice herself abruptly changed the subject. She began to ask a series of questions about the job for which she was applying. Her questions showed a shrewd grasp of working conditions, and her comments upon the interviewer's answers—comments such as "I know how to do that," "That's not

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one of my strong points," "I'd have to learn how to do it that way,"—showed a realistic evaluation of her own capabilities. Here at least was a hint of stability. As the time allotted was up, the interviewer risked a direct question: "How long are you likely to stick at a job of this sort?" Alice looked surprised and paused before replying, "I hadn't thought about not sticking. Of course, if something better turned up, I'd take it."

For an interview with a newcomer like Mary, who had no business experience upon which to draw for interpretative material, the interviewer might have made his approach by asking how she happened to choose this line of work, hoping that the question would disclose something of the manner in which the girl came to decisions, and possibly reveal whether or not she was really suited to a clerical position. The application card provided a better clue with its mention of Mary's two years at college. There might be enlightenment in learning why she had not finished her course, although it would be important to attach no implication of either blame or sympathy in phrasing the inquiry, lest Mary answer the implication rather than the question. Thus, the interviewer, after greeting Mary, glanced at the card and observed, "You have had two years in college." Mary replied that she had intended to complete the course, but financial reasons had forced its discontinuance. She had entered a business school during the summer to prepare to take care of herself. Noting an air of reserve in her manner, the interviewer was careful to remain quite matter-of-fact. He inquired if her father were dead. Mary answered no, but added that his profession was at a standstill now and his expenses heavy. Her younger brother had to be educated, and her older sister, a

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widow with two children, lived at home. As Mary waited for another question, the interviewer remarked that this situation must have occasioned a significant change from her original plans. Mary had not expected to have to work. She had gone to college from private school because it was the natural thing to do. She had enjoyed herself and would have liked going back for two more years. It might have been a help toward getting better positions later, as college graduates seemed to be preferred, but after all, graduates did not really know everything; if she got a job and worked for the next two years, she hoped to be farther along than if she had stayed in college. She had many friends who had given her introductions, and all she wanted was a chance to make good. Mary had perfect poise, answered all questions frankly, but volunteered no personal comments. At casual glance her clothes looked simpler than those of the other girls. To the sophisticated, they were the most expensive and perfect that Fifth Avenue had offered in ready-to-wear last year, not the later and cheaper copies.

The interviewer's choice was determined by where the girl was to be placed. He liked all three of them, but in reaching his decision he had been weighing not only their technical ability, their inherent merits, but also how he presumed they would be able to get along with the particular people among whom they would have to work. Mr. Powers, the head of the department, was an able, dynamic, self-made man, often irascible. His policies as well as his disposition were apt to change over night. When this happened, there was usually late work under pressure. Miss Katz, his assistant, was a very capable, self-made woman. She had gone

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far in the business world by her own efforts. Miss Katz had fought her way up through a hard struggle. She knew she could hold her own in the office, but she hated to be reminded of her early years. Deep wounds may leave ugly scars which people like to hide. No one could get Miss Katz to talk about her childhood and youth, but one guessed that there was no silver lining to the dark cloud over her family. She kept her people in comfort, in the Bronx, and had her own "studio" in Greenwich Village, all done over with modern furnishings whenever the "newest thing" was advertised in the department stores. She was rather dressy. Some of her boy friends were in the clothing trade. She followed the Hollywood trend in clothes and read enough to keep up to date on all the trade news and the latest in night life.

With this in mind, the interviewer had no trouble. Jean was entirely unaccustomed to making adjustments in business or social life. Although she was a conscientious worker, she was emotionally dependent, a habit more firmly fixed on her by years of deferring to an employer of the fatherly type. Neither Mr. Powers nor Miss Katz would supply anything of the parental relation to which Jean was habituated. They would not realize her dependence and might be annoyed at any suggestion that a new employe needed their help. An irascible boss would probably upset Jean so that she could not do her best work, and she could hardly find relief in talking over her difficulties with Miss Katz, because Jean would naturally have some mental reservations about a supervisor who was less prim and proper than her own standards. This might make Jean take an aloof attitude, although Miss Katz would think Jean too much of a nonentity to notice it. On the other hand, she would soon realize that

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Jean's dependence on routine, her unadaptability, made her less able to speed up under pressure, especially amid the chaotic conditions that resulted from the manager's sudden changes and volatile temperament.

Mary's poise would carry her through without her needing any special help from either of her superiors. But this poise, so much a part of Mary's background, would be intolerable to Miss Katz. Although the circumstances of her life were as natural to Mary as the color of her eyes, the things which she took for granted represented the unattainable to the older woman. For one instance, Mary's friends were among the people who set the fashions which Miss Katz and her friends in the clothing trade liked to think they copied, although their results more nearly approximated Hollywood or Broadway.

As the position could give Mary nothing but the wage with no future for her, and the surroundings would be uncongenial, she would not stay longer than the time required to find a position where her personality would be an asset instead of a handicap. Though the well-bred girl was too young and not hard enough to supplant her superior, her presence would be a perpetual reminder to Miss Katz of her own lack of early advantages, and sooner or later the constant discomfort of Mary's proximity would make it easy for Miss Katz to find fault with her work and pick flaws. She would be only too glad when Mary left.

One applicant was the kind who could get along with anyone in a superficial way. Alice showed an easy interest in people and took them as they came without any of Jean's latent insistence that others should measure up to her own standards of "refinement." Her good-natured, easy-going,

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provincial outlook would not imply to Miss Katz the social criticism inherent in Mary's more conventional manners of the world. The interviewer judged that Alice would not get flustered under pressure or become upset with her superior's lack of consideration. She would expect nothing from her employers other than her pay, but she would get something humorous out of any situation. Her comments on office events and personalities would caricature them, not unmercifully, but with a certain racy quality that was without bitterness. She had been in too many offices and her attitude was too shrewd to make the mistake of criticising or allowing her sense of humor to arouse antagonism. Miss Katz would be well able to keep the girl's garrulity in check, and one could rely on Alice's good-humored tolerance to take such snubbing gracefully.

There remained in the interviewer's mind a doubt as to whether Alice would really stick at the job; however, her wholly frank and undefensive answer to his direct query, together with her questions about the routine, which seemed to indicate a real interest in the work, disposed him to consider her a good risk.

The jobs described here are relatively simple. As we shall show, the job analysis required when an executive position is open would be far more exhaustive. Such analysis not only benefits the candidate chosen, but beyond question repays the employer in efficiency of performance and reduction of personnel turnover.

The average worker should have a degree of flexibility. He should be able to adjust himself to several jobs of somewhat similar type. His adaptability should make it possible to shift

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him from one place to another in rush and slack seasons. This much can be asked of any applicant, for it not only saves his employer time and expense but also renders the employee less vulnerable to the hazards of seasonal trades.

Often we hear that Lucy is a fine girl, or John a good fellow, but they have not found just the right niche. This implies that Lucy and John are rather special persons for whom special places are needed. There are of course such people. But more commonly, it is a polite way of talking around their failure to get down to brass tacks. It may be that all they need is a chance to prove themselves. On the other hand, if Lucy and John fail to hold their jobs and explain this by saying that they are looking for the right niche, then it might be wise for them to clarify their ideas before they form the destructive habit of drifting from one place to another. An unending search for ideal conditions may turn them into that class of workers who chronically excuse failure by saying that they are the victims of circumstance. The whole responsibility for placement does not lie with the employer, and industry grows impatient with drifters, since training new workers costs money.

There are a few who go to such an extreme that they find it preferable to have no job rather than one which falls short of their private ideals. They do not express this feeling in words, but job after job is allowed to slip by in the vague hope of their finding the perfect place somewhere in the future. Constantly to court the ideal argues a certain degree of inability to face reality. Common sense prompts that the position and the person should be agreeable to each other, but a really able person can turn a hand at more than one thing and shows ability by adaptability. An estimation of personality in-

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cludes a definite impression of the way in which its owner meets life. Is he courageous without being boastful, eager for an opportunity to test his powers, confident that he can pull his weight in the boat? If so, he will make an energetic effort to accomplish the task in hand creditably in the hope that it may add something to his own value.

Within limits it can be determined what types do better in certain general categories.

A successful salesman is the outgoing type who likes contacts and makes them easily and self-confidently because he really enjoys people and is quick to sense their reactions. He is no hermit, likes to talk, and usually takes his pleasures with a crowd. A good appearance is an asset to him. He needs just enough arithmetic and accuracy to write an order, name and address.

This is not the model for a good accountant. His real interest centers in facts rather than personalities. His appearance is of little import since he will be mostly behind a desk. He should not be too outgoing in personality. A good mixer would not be happy dealing with figures all day. Talking disturbs his concentration. An accountant must naturally be very accurate and meticulous about details.

For a cashier accuracy is essential, but it is the quick, superficial variety. The hiring interviewer takes account of the working conditions in a busy tube-room where the continued popping out of little metal containers creates a steady roar. That is no place for meditation. A girl has to keep her mind on the job. Dexterity is very necessary because she must work quickly with both hands at once. Her motions must be economical, for wasted motion means loss of time, and if the worker slows down, the tubes pile up. There can be no



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sociability where each girl must keep her eyes on her work. In that din, she cannot whisper to her neighbor about "what he said and I said last night." Those who certainly do not belong here are the outgoing people who are at their best in making social contacts. Nor is it a place for dreamers, or for intellectuals. Slow, inaccurate, or definitely one-handed girls cannot make the grade; sensitive, high-strung ones cannot stand the pressure. Cashiers must be built for speed and durability. How do they keep any zest for such a job? The store offers a small bonus for detecting an error in a sales check, so it pays to look closely.

Packers, like cashiers, need nimble fingers. But instead of accuracy in rechecking sales slips and making change, they require the kind of mind which perceives quickly the size and shape of things and their relation to space. Much time is saved by knowing at a glance what size package will be used. During rush hours, and at the busy holiday season, goods come down the chute to the packing room so fast that a worker who had to stop to measure or try this and that would soon be snowed under and the space hopelessly congested. A packer must be the type who can stand pressure and likes to work along steadily, as most good packers do.

More and more important it becomes for the interviewer to know things like these.

Rejection of applicants after a short, fairly impersonal interview is much less difficult than after a lengthy, intimate one, and imposes less responsibility upon the interviewer to justify his decision to the applicant. Such rejection can be simply accomplished by a routine notification that the position has been given to someone felt to have more specific quali-

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fications. Should a decision be necessary at the close of the conversation, the interviewer had best be pleasant but firm, avoiding explanations that might involve him in argument. Rejecting Jean's application, the interviewer said that he was sorry, but she was not quite the person he wanted for that particular position, added that he felt quite sure that with her excellent record she would easily find a place, and thanked her for answering his questions so frankly. In so phrasing his rejection, any implied criticism of her personality was offset by his recognition of her technical equipment, and Jean went off with little apparent disappointment. In rejecting Mary, he used much the same wording, but instead of referring to her record, he suggested that she watch for notices of openings in the correspondence department, as he felt she might well fit in there.

Most applicants will readily accept a rejection based on specific qualifications, or even on personality as related to the particular job. The few who do not, who demand to know why they are not suited, ask a lot of the interviewer's ingenuity. Often, with the sympathy born of his interest in people, he will wish to make some constructive explanation. If Jean, for example, had questioned his rejection—though one doubts if she would—he might have said that her experience as she had described it led him to believe that she would do her best work under somewhat similar conditions, in a smaller organization. This, however, becomes dangerous, for interpretations based on so superficial an interview are sadly fallible, and the interviewer often finds himself forced to defend a position which he knows to be vulnerable. Above all, the interviewer must avoid trying to interpret the applicant to herself. An attempt to tell Jean that she was emo-

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tionally dependent or that she needed a "father person" to work under would be futile. Besides being unintelligible to the average worker, such interpretations of emotional mechanisms evoke emotional resistance in the person at whose doorstep they are laid, and are in no sense helpful to that person. They can be helpful only when translated into concrete situations and suggestions.

The rejection of Mary Smith, the girl with two years in college, contained larger implications that are important in any modern discussion of hiring. These may be summarized briefly by saying that Mary Smith was too good for the job for which she was applying. One of the lessons most forcibly brought home to employers during the recent depression years was that when they took advantage of the buyer's market in labor, adopting the attitude that "the best is none too good for me," they did not act in their own sound interest. The best people were willing, even anxious to work for anything and at anything, considering that no one need be ashamed of useful toil, and deeming it better to work than be idle. College graduates stamped envelopes and ex-bankers became floor-walkers. Their real talents were wasted, and the people better qualified to do these jobs over an indefinite period were kept from their rightful places.

Time showed that management had jumped to the wrong conclusion when it held that the better the education and other advantages of the worker, the better his performance should be. The ability to last the job out proved a more weighty factor than the employe's spurt at the start. Although people of excellent background manifested superior intelligence in attacking routine work, their enthusiasm was likely

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to be short-lived. While they believed they were doing something as a means to an end, they could carry it off with a dash, but they needed milestones on the road on which they were hurrying toward promotion and success. They did not expect to return to the same point every morning, like the milk man's horse. Nothing was too hard for these superior workers when it was bringing them nearer their objective, but once they began to think that, as the Red Queen had said, "We have to run as fast as this to stand still," they rapidly became dissatisfied. They were not willing to look around and tell themselves, "If we are not going to get anywhere, that is that. Why worry about it? This is as pleasant as we could expect, so why not settle here and enjoy life as we find it?" That comfortable philosophy, which consoles the less able and the static worker, was not for them. Those who remained on the job were marking time for personal or economic reasons or were afraid to let go; meanwhile the employer found that instead of a contented staff, he now had workers who were defeated and discouraged. Industry was not getting the bargain it expected when it filled up the ranks with people whose standards of living could not be maintained with what they could hope to earn, and whose wasted training and abilities turned into a feeling of frustration when no good use was made of them.

Even the standard of gentility was found to be misleading. An analysis of the general characteristics of fifty employees with perennially high sales records revealed that practically none of them belonged to that class of lady-like salesladies and clean-cut young men most often preferred by employment offices. To the chagrin of the hiring interviewer, the study showed that many of these salespeople had been rejected

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on their first appearance. They had subsequently entered service at the Christmas season, a time of indiscriminate employment, and had been retained because of their excellent sales totals. They were of foreign parentage, of limited education, plain-featured, but enthusiastic and active. They belonged to a social class in which they could live easily on their comparatively humble salaries. Many had dependents, which controverted the assumption that those who worked for a business career alone were superior. They had few interests outside of their job and home, and some were not even concerned with their homes; consequently, being of the outgoing type, they enjoyed meeting people. They took particular pleasure in building up a clientele, and derived social prestige from their contacts with important customers, especially when those customers would come in and ask for them by name. Quite different they were from better educated employes, some of whom were apt to look down on the people on whom they waited.

Jobs belong to those who do them best. When complaints were made of two departments in which there were constant inharmonies, an investigation brought to light that they were squads overstaffed with generals. The first department, which sold materials for interior decorating, had a sales force largely comprised of art school graduates. Some of them were mature, with years of experience as interior decorators themselves, until bad times had driven them to refuge in sales-work. Two had even studied abroad. All were ambitious or disappointed in their ambitions, apt to be critical of the buyer and manager of their department, and convinced that their own merits were unrecognized. They were individualistic and resented supervision.

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These people were too well-equipped for their jobs and in some instances would have done better out on their own, but they did not have the attributes which would allow them to become department heads. Simple sales clerks under competent management would have answered the requirements. The problem of restoring the department to smooth functioning was difficult and involved the dispersal of its members; some were given better positions, where that was possible, and others were told frankly that to improve themselves they would have to look elsewhere. The more self-reliant accepted the suggestion and eventually left. Those that remained either contented themselves or were dismissed at the first sign of further rebellion. The consequence was that they made way for job-seekers who were happy with behind-the-counter work. The most humane consideration at all times, even during economic crises, is that those who deserve the jobs should have them.

The second department was also full of jealousies and conflict. This department was found to be staffed with young men of poor background, most of whom were attending college at night. This scholastic opportunity called for many sacrifices at home and during the day, and from this they were inordinately ambitious. They could not reconcile their intellectual and educational qualifications with the humble duties their age and business experience allowed them. They scorned their buyer and department head, and also many of the higher store officials, when they compared these older business men with their brilliant economics professors. Necessity and temperament forced them to be aggressive, and since they were well-matched the competition among them became excessively keen. They were forever nagging the

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personnel office for advancement and complaining that they were not receiving fair treatment from their superiors. Such a department undoubtedly had potentialities for wide-spread trouble-making, since its members were clever and articulate. Of all the types encountered in hiring, none is so likely to contain the disturber and malcontent as that in which the hiatus between the intellectual and educational equipment of the applicant and his social background is too great. His anxiety to improve himself socially whets his ambition and instills him with impatience. His very lack of background may limit his business effectiveness more than he is willing to admit, or if he should be aware of it, he resents it sharply. But he is also apt to be exceedingly able.

The hiring interviewer's rule, learned from sad experience, was not to accept applicants of this type unless there were definite opportunities for advancement open to them. Definitely too many young men of the type should not be brought together and forced into competition with each other, lest the struggle become harsh and the resultant disappointments bring labor troubles in their wake.

The young men in this department were individually given a clear understanding of what promotional opportunities each might expect. Those who did not feel these opportunities compatible with their ambitions, were advised to seek new places when the school term ended, or even before. Some were dismissed when the school vacation period began, since their term of service did not entitle them to the consideration due older employees and this was felt to be the soundest course open to the organization. Presumably they went on to other and better suited fields somewhat the wiser after a disciplinary experience.

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As the number of college students and graduates multiplies, the difficulty of placing them in industry where their legitimate expectations will be gratified becomes an intricate problem. Their ranks yearly increase in disproportion to the openings that await them. They no longer face competition with untrained minds, but tread on the heels of the college generation that just preceded them. Whether they will be content to wait their turn, or whether they will accommodate themselves to expect less of industry as a reward for their college degrees, only tomorrow will reveal. Discrimination and proper placement among the college-trained promises to be the chief concern of the hiring interviewer of the future.

The hiring interview, properly conducted, requires knowledge of the technique of getting significant information and of evaluating that information. Equally essential is a knowledge of the job itself and of all its demands, not only in terms of ability but of the personalities that will be concerned. Failing these, hiring is haphazard and costly.



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THE new employe is naturally bewildered by his strange environment. Alice, the versatile girl who had worked in nine different offices in a year, would adapt herself without a tremor. She would be prepared to encounter the unfamiliar faces, personalities, business systems and the eccentricities that individualize every office, and do all this amidst clatter and bustle. But for others the experience would be tiring physically, mentally, and emotionally. Jean, who had worked nine years in one place, would find herself exhausted and perhaps a bit frightened at the end of the first day; the general routine would be the same, but many details would be different.

We might pause to imagine Alice's approach. The experienced girl would glance around the office and quickly choose another worker with whom she would go to lunch. That would be the beginning of Alice's business education in this new job; for her fellow worker would tell her at once just whom she must strive to please and what she might expect of each of her superiors. A week would find Alice well established.

For Jean and Mary Smith a more formal education than

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this would be desirable. They would welcome a short training course. The classroom would be quiet, so that they might concentrate. An expert teacher would explain their duties to them, imparting something more than just enough to "get by." Jean would have time, in such a course, to unlearn the work patterns so thoroughly ingrained in her; Mary Smith, whose first job it was, would have exactly defined what her prospective task demanded. Even before he reported to the warehouse, John Gordon would receive some practical instruction. The management would recognize the need of supplementing proper placement by teaching new workers enough so that they might enter upon their jobs with an all-important sense of security sanctioned by knowledge. There can be no clear judgment of how well a new worker performs unless he is fully acquainted with what he is supposed to do.

The formal training of new employees has become an essential and profitable feature of any personnel routine. This has come about through the increasing complexity of modern industry, with its consequent emphasis upon specialization, together with a heightened appreciation of the potentialities for efficiency latent in even the humblest job. When highly paid business experts have devised systems or analysed general policies for sales clerks, correspondents, delivery or repair men, adjustment clerks or telephone operators, obviously the workers themselves should be fully taught how to realize such improvements. The old haphazard method of self-instruction on the job has been largely discarded in major industry today.

There are possible faults inherent in this expert training policy. They include a tendency to standardize job performance and inspire in the new employe a feeling that his per-

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sonal contribution is destined to be overlooked in an institution so large and well-organized. The training is therefore quite inefficient if new workers are instilled with this fear. John Gordon in the warehouse, Alice in the office, Mary Smith at correspondence, must be reassured that their identities have not been lost. That reassurance benefits them. Industry is also benefited because their work does not become an uninspired routine as it might otherwise be from the very start. But finally, that reassurance serves public justice, making its appeal to those who believe that work is a duty to society, but one that should be acknowledged by the general economy in terms of salary and position appropriate to the performance. This acknowledgment of individuality is articulated in the training course.

"You have become one of many thousands of workers, Mary Smith, but you remain an individual. You will be considered as such through the agency of our personnel department, where is kept a record of your performance, based on reports submitted regularly by your immediate superiors; these reports will also be compared with the impressions gained of you at the time of your employment. You can assume that those impressions were favorable, or you would not be here. There is advancement for some, but not for all, and there are regular salary reviews, with recommendations based on the way you do your work. These reports and recommendations will not be kept secret, but will supply the material for interviews at stated intervals, when you will be told of any commendation or criticism that has reached us. You will have an opportunity at the same time to offer any explanations you feel necessary. Should any special circum-

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stances arise, the personnel department of course will want to know of them."

The chief need of any new employe is friendliness. From the very beginning, the personnel department directs his considerate reception by his fellow-workers. The immediate superior pays him special attention for the first few weeks, or perhaps the newcomer is sponsored by some older employe who has been rewarded for outstanding service by this additional responsibility, an appointment that carries with it an extra dollar in the pay envelope. The sponsor fills the rôle, in a sense, of Alice's co-worker instructing her across the luncheon table, but provides that the best employe in the department sets the example.

This friendliness cannot be forced or merely politic. It limits personnel work to those who are spontaneously interested in people and able to share their emotional responses, but who at the same time can act realistically from the employer's point of view. An unrealistic sympathy may only delay the best solution of a personnel problem and do the employe no true service. There may have been errors of judgment in the hiring interview; the newcomer may not be fitted for his job and there may be no other opening for him. He should not be kept. The longer his failure continues, the deeper his whole confidence is undermined. He should be released to pursue the search for a better place for himself in industry, before his term of service shall have lengthened to where his employers feel an increased reluctance to dismiss him, born of closer personal association. The phrase "no sentiment in business" has its highest validity here.

This of course refers to obvious mistakes in placement.

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The more subtle ones will sometimes become apparent only after years have passed. They then involve questions of "social responsibility," which is a more complex subject.

The source for new workers is generally the schools, and in some industries there is a deliberate attempt to recruit their employes from each year's graduates. But even these alert employers forget that going to work may not make one an adult over night. There is a period of transition when one gives up his old security, just as there was that earlier period of adjustment when one left complete parental control for the wider experience of school itself. The continued childishness of many workers, the emotional infantilism remarked as so widespread, results in part from poor guidance of these young recruits in their first contact with the real world.

The first job is of crucial importance in the development of individual competence. Successful adjustment to it predisposes the individual to success on subsequent assignments. Failure to adjust to a first job handicaps the employe in undertaking a second. Repeated failure may handicap him beyond recovery. From this rises the social responsibility of the hiring interviewer to place beginners, especially those of limited insight and adaptability, in the right positions and under supervisors who will train and develop them instead of expecting them to land on their feet and work out their own salvation. This does not mean that they should never be on their own, but the test should be postponed until they are reasonably equipped. Modern business is a Goliath, and every David should have his slingshot.

Most misleading is the premise that the schools themselves

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have provided this equipment for independence. The scholastic world is one of constant supervision in which the student is allowed little initiative; intellectual achievement too often denotes a good memory and an acceptance of the ideas of others. To a certain extent, this mental subservience is compulsory, an inevitable part of the learning process. Although the results of this mental training are definitely helpful in business, enabling one to grasp instructions and methods quickly, to bring to the job a breadth of outlook, an ability to organize and analyze facts; the more important faculty, that of standing on one's own feet, is often neglected. In consequence, business must continue the supervision long enough for the newcomer to feel firm ground beneath him. The period of insecurity in young workers is emphatically the rule and not the exception. Faced for the first time by the realization that they are really on their own, and by the demands of industry which are so different from the demands of education, they are presented with a tremendous threat, the necessity for success and the fear of failure.

The beginner is not entitled to complete security; rightfully he should be considered on probation. Contrasted to security there should be the challenge of a minimum of insecurity. The latter is tonic. It enables the beginner to discover his full capabilities which he might otherwise never plumb. But certainly there is due him all the help that adequate training can lend. It does not matter how simple the job.

For example, the following exemplary training methods have been designed for salespeople. A new sales clerk is employed, after satisfactorily passing the hiring tests, but he is not sent on the floor to repeat what he did in his last place or to learn by observation. He first receives an explana-

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tion of system, of the slips or tickets used in different transactions. He is instructed as to the general policies of the organization. He has lessons in salesmanship, not only in the initial approach to customers, but also in specific suggestions for presenting all types of merchandise. In the separate departments, the buyer and assistants regularly give him information about the merchandise, so that he is not only trained in the mechanics of the job, but acquires a general background which makes his work more interesting. A special feature is the practice sale, wherein the new clerk demonstrates his selling technique to a training supervisor, who offers constructive criticism.

The novice is placed under a sponsor who guides him through his first weeks. To be a sponsor might seem a thankless task in spite of the small extra pay, but actually the honor is coveted. The clerk who undertakes this extra work successfully and still maintains his own pace is deemed outstanding. An invitation to be a sponsor gives prestige and provides a considerable source of satisfaction; so an appointment to sponsorship is one of the ways in which the head of a department shows appreciation of loyal, creditable service.

Not only selling but every job has its technique which can be taught in detail.

Allowance must be made for the physical weariness that accompanies the mental and emotional struggle for orientation. It takes time for the stenographer to become used to the eight-hour clatter of her machine, the salesgirl to become accustomed to eight hours of quick motion on her feet, the stock boy to limber up to the full day's exercise of loading

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his hand truck. Afterward, the obverse is true. The "new broom" sweeps clean; the young worker, fully trained and confidently enthusiastic, sets himself a pace that he is not always able to continue. The astute employer is not disappointed when his most promising new recruit begins to slow down; he has anticipated this final adjustment.

But the more energetically the "new broom" goes into action, the higher is likely to be the level which he considers his normal pace. He should therefore be prompted to show himself, as well as his employers, everything of which he is capable. His natural ambition will help to spur him, but recognition from his superiors will do even more. The employer should not wait too long; that kindling enthusiasm should not be allowed to flicker because of indifference. On the other hand, the employer owes it to his new employee to make no promises which cannot be kept. To do so, will vitiate their whole future relationship. The lightly given and soon forgotten word may have been inspired by momentary optimism rather than by deliberate insincerity, but it breeds an ineradicable discontent. The employer is exempt no more than the employee from the obligation of keeping faith.

Training, friendliness, supervision: these guide the new employee. With their help he feels adequate to meet work's inflexible situations. He goes forward; he does not fall back on some childhood pattern that requires preferential treatment and that causes him to be disturbed and fearful without it. Quite contrary to the accepted belief that the best way to encourage self-reliance lies in the injunction to sink or swim, industry by the use of generous, sympathetic direction



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will promote an eventual higher level of maturity among its workers than it now has.

The great Charlemagne who was crowned Emperor in 800 A.D. was described by his contemporary, Eginhard: "At meal-times he listened to music or reading. He used to keep his writing-book and tablets under his pillow, that when he had leisure he might practice his hand in forming letters, but he made little progress in an art begun too late in life."

The point of this story, of course, is obvious. There were no tests for imperial aptitudes, other than for Charlemagne to create the position for himself and hold it, which he did. If Charlemagne had tried to be a clerk, his first employer might have kindly suggested that he take up soldiering rather than put his ill-formed pot-hooks in competition with the fine hand of a scribe. History might have been written differently, for young Charlemagne might have early developed a sense of inferiority from being b'amed for a lack of intelligence. It was not a lack of intelligence that this great man could not write, we know, but of initial adequate training.

SECURITY

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JOHN GORDON'S case was a study of insecurity. All that shall be said in this book hereafter will be directed to the goal of understanding what is meant by giving a worker security on the job in its fullest sense, and to a realization of how fundamental this is. This is a large subject and involves much more than is commonly supposed. The consequences of insecurity are often far more obvious than its causes. We have seen this with John Gordon. The moment Gordon went into the radio department and undertook something he could not handle, he began to lose confidence in himself, worry about his future, with the result that his performance grew worse in a vicious circle of hidden cause and effect.

The need and desire for security is common to us all. From birth, when life begins to demand adjustments from us, we are exposed to dangers on all sides, so that in life we are in the midst of continual insecurity, against which we battle, and to meet which we equip ourselves with such physical, intellectual and emotional weapons as we can devise.

Human beings continue until death to fight insecurity. This struggle, this seeking, influences their attitudes, desires,

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decisions; and affects the behavior patterns and trends which determine their personalities.

If we reflect how promptly and with what vigor a baby yells if he is left hungry or in pain or discomfort, we see at once how early in life human beings are subjected to threats, and how immediate is their protest against them.

Going a little further, we can gauge the power of the human desire for security. When a baby's security is threatened, he first learns fear. His baby response may be crying, but as he grows up he learns more and more to meet such fears by independent action. His personal problem is to learn how he may ensure to himself the necessities for survival as an individual, and his impulse will be to achieve these with the maximum safety and comfort to himself. It is a far remove from the baby who yells for what he wants to the man who maps out his career in order to earn his living, yet both are responding to a fundamental human need.

Security is defined as "freedom from fear, anxiety or care; confidence of power or safety."

The definition is rightly a double one, for security has a twofold meaning. The first part of the definition refers to outward security, environmental security. The situation in infancy is the prototype of outward security, since infants are fed, cared for, loved and protected, without effort on their part. Young children have still a great measure of outward security in the supervision and guidance of their parents. As the childish horizon broadens, the child is less and less protected, until in adulthood he is ordinarily exposed to the full impact of life.

Many of us enjoy comparative security throughout life. The man with a steady job, a comfortable wage, family and

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friends, has outward security. But there is always the danger that he may lose these. He may be laid off, his salary may be cut, he may become ill or suffer an accident which prevents his working. His wife may go off with another man, his friends move away or drop him.

His attitude to these outward threats, which are always implicit in the business of living, is determined by the degree of inner security. If he feels himself well-equipped technically to find another job, if he feels sure that his own love and consideration for his wife, and his affection and common interests with his friends, will ensure to him their reciprocal affection, he has inner security. If, however, when outwardly all is well, he lives in constant terror of losing his job, or his savings, or of being ill and unable to work, or if he fears his wife no longer loves him, such an attitude betokens inner insecurity in the face of the ordinary hazards of life.

Human growth shows the relationship between these concepts of outward and inner security. Babies and young children need their parents' protection and love as a medium in which they may develop self-confidence and the strength to strike out for themselves. The atmosphere of security with which they are surrounded cushions them against the increasing demands upon their effort which growing up implies. Each new thing a child learns to do, each new step he accomplishes, builds into his developing personality a self-confidence which in turn enables him to learn something more, to take another step towards adult independence. Gradually the outward security provided by parental love and care is replaced by an inner security in the child. As the inner security grows, the need for outward security diminishes, and

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such a child, if his experiences in later childhood and during his school life continue in this constructive proportion, is at maturity able to take his part in the world.

Such a person is fortunate indeed. Press him too hard, however, put burdens upon him beyond his capacity to carry them, and even he may grow insecure.

Fear is the great enemy of human self-confidence. Too great fear in the life of a child breeds an insecurity which may hound him throughout his life. It is easy to control people through fear. We see this in the parent-child relationship, where parents fall back on fear as an easy method of discipline. This may be carried on through the whole school experience, forming in the child's life a pattern of reaction to threats in the environment.

Happily, modern concepts of child guidance are spreading in homes and schools, and the understanding is growing that better results are obtained by developing a child through encouragement and approval for desirable behavior than by punishing him for mistaken efforts to get what he wants.

But, unfortunately, fear is still too often used as a means of controlling adults. On the job, where in a sense is reproduced between employer and employe the earlier parent-child relationship, we find this to be particularly true. The blustering executive revives for his underlings the old situation in which as children they were disciplined by parents or teachers. The threat of lay-off affects employes as did the childhood threat of punishment. Adult responses to such fear-control tend to repeat the childhood reaction to fear-provoking experiences. Industry, like parents and like schools, must recognize the fear element inherent in the job situation and learn to combat it.

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Obviously when we are afraid, we usually fight back or run away, or else we try to get around the fear by bluffing it out. Whatever way works the best is the one we tend to fall back on when a new fear attacks us. As very young children, as infants even, we are already learning to use one or another of these ways to combat fear, and the patterns we establish in those early impressionable years are the ones we tend to use all our lives.

We all know the youngster who runs to mother at the slightest hurt—and the adult who leaves his job at the slightest dissatisfaction. We all know the child who brags that he can beat the bigger boy but who never tries to, and the man who always talks of what he is going to do but never accomplishes anything. We all know the small boy who does things behind his mother's back for fear of chastisement, and the man who intrigues behind the boss's back to undermine the power that can punish him. We all know the rebellious child, and the adult who attacks everything from the social order to the manners of his superiors.

Outward threats are particularly present in that part of life with which industry today has to deal; namely, that of earning a living. As civilization has grown more complicated, general insecurity has been manifested to a greater degree than was formerly apparent. During the past years of economic depression, scarcity of work, changes in jobs due to technological improvements, low wage scales, seasonal unemployment have all become common.

In our whole national set-up there was, until recently, very little recognition given to the importance of the problem of insecurity. In many countries in Europe some effort towards relieving insecurity was made several decades ago through

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insurance and pensions for old age, unemployment and sickness, those three threats which put fear into the hearts of all men. The average workman abroad learns a trade, sticks to it, and on the whole enjoys a greater feeling of security both for his active years and his retirement, than does his American brother.

Our American tradition of individualism has fostered the idea of "making a million," and this hope has been realized just often enough to have fired the imagination of workers from the lowest to the highest. It is true that in other countries the lower classes have not produced so many successful men who have risen from the ranks, but in this country, the possibility of the elevation of a few exacts a great penalty in uncertainty among the mass of workers. This typically American "rags to riches" success story has given rise to a point of view, among those who have pushed ahead, that the unsuccessful are shiftless, do not want to work, or do poor jobs—an assumption as fallacious as that of the failure who claims that all success is a matter of crookedness or the "breaks." Yet it is more harmful, for it goads workers too far by implying that he who fails is a worthless fellow.

Now that the get-rich-quick ideas of pioneer days have been to some extent checked by a world-wide depression, we are beginning to see that no person can be expected to succeed in circumstances beyond his control, and our attitude to failure may have become sufficiently modified to divorce it from the idea of shiftlessness. If, out of the depression, our working classes have emerged with some form of old age and unemployment insurance, we have made some recognition of the human need for security, and our national phi-

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losophy will have caught up a little with modern economic conditions.

There is no little truth in the analogy that as a nation we are like children, who can develop a more rounded maturity in an atmosphere of security.

The Federal and state pension and insurance plans that have been put into practice will undoubtedly do something to alleviate these oppressive worries which make it impossible for the average worker to do his best when employed. But they do not as yet apply to the whole working population, nor do they promise to pay large enough amounts in many instances to remove fear altogether, especially during periods of prolonged lay-offs. Besides this, the worker now faces the tendency of industry to drop people at an increasingly early age, with little probability that they can save enough, in a shortened span of productive years, to support themselves or maintain their accustomed standard of living through a lengthened period of retirement. The younger generation cannot assume the double burden of retired parents and dependent children over a greater length of time.

These questions, however interesting and however important in the study of security in its broadest sense, are beyond the scope of this book, and regardless of how or when they are to be answered, industry will still have other problems of insecurity. Even if workers know that they have the certainty of insurance and pensions, there is still, inherent in the relation of an employe to his job, the basis for a feeling of insecurity. Executives can afford to give more and more attention to dealing with the problems of personal security in the work situation, because if handled wisely, workers will



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be able to do a better job; indeed, speaking realistically, employers will find it more and more to their advantage.

During the recent depression, with its resulting scarcity of jobs, supervisors had the common complaint that workers were not doing their best. They said, "As scarce as jobs are, it would seem that people who still have them would do better work, knowing that they might be laid off at any time and that the labor market is full of good people who are willing to work for less. Yet the very ones who cannot afford to lose their positions often do the poorest work."

The very scarcity of employment puts too great pressure upon individual security. A study of many cases indicates that especially among people who hold very mediocre jobs, general fear is reflected in lessened efficiency and an increased tendency towards inaccuracy. This was the story of John Gordon. .

The head of a large organization said recently, "I consider the fear of losing one's job the greatest factor in increasing production, and I see to it that none of my people feel too secure about their jobs."

This policy, if followed indiscriminately, can be wholly barbarous, yet it contains a valuable truth.

The point here is the degree of fear to which a person is subjected. When the fear is an amount with which he can cope, it becomes a stimulus, a challenge to better performance. Opposite the fear stands the individual's hope and capacity to meet the threat and thereby achieve an increased security. To use fear constructively means to present a challenge which one has some hope of meeting, and this in turn demands a discrimination which can only come from a thorough knowledge of what fears are inherent in the outward, environ-

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mental situation, as well as what inner fears reside in the individual himself.

People consciously or unconsciously know what degree of fear they can grapple with, and show this by their behavior. Therefore an executive can tell something about his employees by the reaction they show to a threat, and can gauge his own handling thereby.

Though fear may often produce the desired results for a time, it cannot be counted upon over a long period without building up in the recipient a whole series of anxieties which will inevitably come out in some form of unacceptable behavior. One must question the personal adjustment of an executive who habitually uses fear as a means of controlling his employees. We have observed that too often such a person is himself so insecure and so immature that he must threaten others so that he himself will not be threatened, must bluster around to cover up a feeling that he could not manage people in any other way.

The following is a typical case of the destructive effect produced by fear of losing a job.

A man forty-seven years old was referred to the Conference Office. He was said to be irresponsible, doing poor work, and a possible "mental case." His supervisor recommended lay-off, but because of his eight years of service his history was studied.

This man's job was to collect merchandise from the floor and take it to the packing room. For several years he had been earning the maximum wage for this work. His rating had been good until about nine months previously. Then he had changed. His resentment of criticism and failure to

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improve when spoken to about his poor performance were interpreted by his supervisor as uncooperative.

This supervisor had come into the department about the time that the man had begun to do his work badly. She was a bright, capable young woman who was anxious to have a well-run department. She decided that the kind of routine work which he had been doing could be given to boys at not more than eighteen dollars a week, and that in order to earn his maximum wage he should assume much more complicated responsibilities. She reorganized the work on this basis. Although she attempted to be very fair in her estimate of him, she felt that he had in the past got by with a small amount of work, and it was evident that she meant those days to be ended. She stated quite frankly that she could get a younger person for eighteen dollars who would do a better job and be more agreeable about it. She had often told him this.

When called for an interview, the man was stilted and pompous and he had a number of strange facial mannerisms. He smiled foolishly, simpered, gesticulated and jumped up from his chair in order to illustrate what he was saying. Then he would sink back as though exhausted. He appeared first elated, then depressed. His hands trembled and he stuttered slightly. He seemed to be in a state of over-excitement, was confused, continually brought in all sorts of irrelevant statements, contradicted himself repeatedly and could not remember certain significant points. He was talkative, but it was difficult to get him to speak about himself. Any discussion of his job made him defensive and increased his agitation. He was a small, under-nourished looking man who appeared older than forty-seven and probably was. He

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had very likely stated that he was younger than his real age at the time of employment.

There were, however, no symptoms of any real mental disease. This exaggerated behavior, apparent mental cloudiness, and what seemed to be a memory deterioration, could all be explained on the basis of insecurity and fear. He had worked so long from day to day in the constant dread of being laid off that he interpreted the interview as a preliminary to getting rid of him. Due to the excitement caused by his fear, his behavior became conspicuously abnormal.

A social investigation brought out a rather pitiful situation. The family lived in a dark, damp basement: he and his wife and four small children, the eldest eight and youngest seven months old. His small wage hardly fed and clothed six people in New York City; while they had managed to keep out of debt, they had saved nothing. Their actual dependence on daily work for daily bread had made him acutely apprehensive about the attitude of the new supervisor.

This man had worked satisfactorily over a period of years during which there was no complaint about his routine performance. No one had reproofed or threatened him. When the new supervisor brought in boys who were paid less, he could see financial competition which he could not afford without great deprivation to his family. He was barely making ends meet at the maximum wage; how could he face the possibility of a pay cut?

While he was laboring under this fear, he was shifted to work which called for frequent decisions and the use of some judgment and memory. His mind was so preoccupied with his own worries that he could not break the habit of simple

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routine work and give constant attention to new responsibilities. His indecision and errors of judgment probably seemed to him to show the effect of age, which was in itself a threat, especially in the midst of new, younger employees. When his mistakes brought reproof from the supervisor, this only confirmed his fears, and her repeated warnings intensified them. Of course the supervisor had not intended anything destructive, but in her youthful enthusiasm for doing an efficient job had entirely missed the personal element, with results quite the opposite of what she sought. Her use of fear to get full value out of the man, was first implied by showing him that she expected more work to justify his maximum wage. Then, having frightened him into such a state that he could not function normally, she rebuked him in a further effort to get better service.

After a study of the case, it was decided to make an attempt to work with the man rather than to lay him off. Clearly his increasingly poor performance resulted from an ever-present fear of losing the job. It was recommended that he be given the less complicated collector's duties which he had formerly handled well. Moreover, he was placed under another supervisor who could understand him better and could give him enough security to relieve his tension.

All this was accomplished without a reduction in pay. It was considered good economy to pay the maximum wage to this man, who had been well-trained in the department and who was content with the routine job, since boys who might fill the job equally well at eighteen dollars a week were a turnover risk owing to their ambitions to "get on in the world."

In the new situation he became less and less agitated and

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his work improved noticeably. After a few months he seemed a different person.

Any warning is a threat to security even if the purpose of the warning be merely to help the individual improve by calling attention to errors. Frequently superiors feel that they can make a frank statement of an employe's faults because, being kind-hearted, well-meaning, and conscious of responsibility for personnel, they expect the employe to know that they approach the subject from that point of view, solely in the interest of efficiency. What the superior fails to grasp is that there are implications in reproof which speak louder than words, so that even when mistakes are pointed out kindly, an insecure person jumps to the conclusion that his whole performance is under fire.

A well-adjusted person may accept such an implied threat objectively and profit by the suggestions of his superior. An insecure person cannot. If repeated warning fails to correct the errors, the supervisor must look into the problem more deeply. His proper approach is: "What in the whole situation is causing this person to respond this way?" and not, "This dolt pays no attention to what I say." A lack of training may be the basis for the trouble, for which instruction could be given as a routine matter with no hint of censure. No one should be blamed for ignorance, since the fault, if any, rests with the responsible instructor. But if a worker has already demonstrated that he knows how to do a thing satisfactorily, and later falls below his own standard of performance, this suggests that something is troubling him so that his difficulties would only be increased by a warning, whether expressed or implied. If a worker fears that he may be demoted or laid

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off unless he immediately changes his behavior, he is seldom able to surmount the double handicap.

Carol Watson's case exemplifies the way in which an insecure person may deteriorate rapidly under these circumstances. The need for security increases in proportion as the environment seems to threaten, until it is hard for an untrained observer to tell the cause from effect.

Carol Watson had average intelligence and no physical disabilities, other than nearsightedness, for which she wore glasses. She was a prim, neat, efficient person who had been employed for eleven years, the last ten in one department, where her conscientious efforts and outstanding accuracy made her a pillar of dependability. She was invaluable for extra work such as sponsoring new clerks. Although she was not a fast worker, her sales volume was good. She was always willing to do odd jobs, was always the first to come and the last to leave.

When she entered this department the merchandise was of a staple character, which suited Carol's rather unimaginative mind. Later, owing to changes in fashion, part of the line became very smart. Carol never developed style sense or originality. With her limited background and her stolid temperament it was hardly to be expected.

She got on well with other girls but had only one chum, who left without even telling Carol that she was being married.

Carol cried for two days. Later she tried to make contacts with other clerks, but although she was only twenty-five years old they thought her old-maidish and left her out of their circle.

Just after she lost her chum, Carol went on her summer

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vacation and her place was taken over by another girl, far quicker and more colorful. At the same time N.R.A. went into effect.

When she returned from her vacation, Carol began to slump. This was noticeable first in low volume. Then her stock work grew poor and was always unfinished at six o'clock, the deadline for closing. The section manager talked frankly to Carol, saying this was not like her, and advising her to speed up on selling and to start stock work earlier. Later Carol began to make errors, grew tense, and more and more silent. The section manager explained to her that she was falling off, that he had every confidence in her and was going to give her less to do. There was no change. This was a perfect example of the wrong treatment.

At Christmas, Carol was chosen to be a sponsor in the toy department. Although she was told this was only a temporary transfer, she wept at leaving her regular place. When she returned to her own department after Christmas, she was worse than ever, but when the section manager asked her what was the matter, she insisted that she was happy in the department, that she liked her work and that nothing was wrong. She was just tired. After this experience her inefficiency became more obvious. In trying to get her to improve, the section manager made efforts along the lines which had increased her difficulties before, always with the same effect. The section manager, having tried hard, and convinced of the correctness of his handling, could only blame Carol; he was now ready to discharge her.

He explained his recommendation for lay-off as based on "slowing up on job, poor volume, inaccurate, seems confused and unhappy." This wording suggested that the case should



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be studied, and Carol's length of service and previous good record pointedly justified the supposition that different treatment might help to restore her former reliability.

The facts were assembled through interviews with superiors and studies of past records. Something was learned of Carol's background which threw light on her limitations. She had been an only child, whose father died when she was four. Her mother had supported her by taking in laundry. Carol had left school at fifteen to go to work to supplement their income. They now lived together and were so devoted to each other that Carol preferred her mother's company to that of "frivolous" girls and boys. Her chum, now married, had been her only friend. Her chief amusements were cooking, sewing, and singing in her church choir. This background somewhat explained Carol's inability to adjust quickly to new situations, though her accuracy and grasp of instructions were good.

Carol had fitted into a staple department much as a child settles into the protected atmosphere of school. Her security lay in being the "good girl," the one to whom everybody turned, the one who was always chosen for sponsoring and little extra jobs. This had been her pride, and perhaps especially important because her life outside of the store was so meager. On the surface her work was a mature interest, but underneath, her emotions were those of a child dependent upon its mother. She showed this by crying whenever she faced difficulties, and by clinging to the familiar surroundings of her department as she did to her home.

As a by-product of her close tie to her mother, she did not make social contacts readily. Evidently she had closed her mind to them at the age when she identified herself with

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her mother and the older generation so much that she looked down on her own contemporaries. She had not seemed to realize that they could grow up, have interests of their own, marry and assume adult responsibilities while she continued to be a child at home. She had only one friend in the department, just as she had only one person outside. Even her relation to her chum must have been on an immature level, since Carol, in this one-sided friendship, was left out of all confidences about this girl's plans to resign and marry. She cried for days over a person who apparently cared so little for her that she left without giving Carol a thought. Although Carol tried to be friendly with her other co-workers, she simply did not fit because her interests were not those of active girls of her own age.

When she returned from her vacation her safe world was changed. Not only had her special prerogatives been taken over by someone with a more colorful personality, but the new N.R.A. rules created a situation she could not meet. She had always got her work done by being the first to arrive and staying late, but N.R.A. forbade overtime. She had enjoyed the prestige of sponsoring and doing other special jobs, and having no boys and parties to make her want to rush off early, she was contented to remain late in the only place where she had something to do which made her feel important. When forced to leave at the official closing time, she found that she was unable to accomplish even her regular work, and thus could not hope to win back the extra little jobs which the other girl had taken on during her absence.

Carol knew she was slow when N.R.A. regulations brought her face to face with this fact. Then the section manager's

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repeated attempts to speed up her work rendered her so conscious of her own limitations that with her resulting sense of insecurity it was impossible for her to do her best.

The toy assignment served only to increase her growing insecurity. At the Christmas season it was the custom to employ a great many extra sales people who understood that they would be laid off after the rush time. One of the places almost entirely staffed by this transient group was the Toy Department, where things move very fast and clerks work under the greatest pressure. Carol was not the right type for this assignment because she adjusted slowly, was not a fast worker, and would be seriously worried by feeling that she could be spared from her accustomed place at the busy season, especially as she was sent among people who were soon to be laid off. She made a great effort and did fairly well, but it was not surprising that a slow, limited, insecure person should suffer from the strain of trying to meet with the rush and pressure while worrying about her own future.

After the strain of the Christmas assignment, Carol was unfortunately allowed no respite. The section manager's effort to work with her through frankness plunged her anew into the midst of her problem. Instead of commending her for things she did, he harped on what she could not do. She was obviously threatened by his well-meant frankness, and the more he used it, the more tense and silent she grew. It was slow paralysis.

Even before this point was reached, the section manager might have realized that any remedy which brings the wrong results should be changed. But he was attempting to treat symptoms without having any idea that there might be an

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underlying cause for Carol's behavior. Doubtless he could have been brought to understand this and to correct his error instead of feeling that he had no alternative to discharging Carol, but he was unexpectedly transferred to another position.

The change brought in a new section manager, a woman of broad sympathies, who could understand the interpretation given to her of Carol's problem. This relieved the situation. She reorganized the girl's work to include complete charge of a very staple section. Carol had been attempting too much, but now she was freed from constant reminders of her shortcomings. If she made any mistakes, they were unnoticed. At the first sight of improvement the new section manager was quick to commend Carol, and she never mentioned the former difficulties to her. Another favorable element was the sex of the new supervisor. Carol, who had been so exclusively devoted to her mother, naturally felt more at ease under the guidance of an understanding woman.

At the same time Carol was introduced to the store's social worker, who invited her to sew on costumes for an entertainment in rehearsal. At first Carol thought she would not go to the meetings, but she was finally persuaded. She sat back diffidently, always slow to enter into a new group. Finally her interest in sewing asserted itself and she consented to help. Not only did she prove herself a good seamstress, but she surprised everyone by showing some originality in design. This won her praise, and then she began to blossom out just as in the days when she had taken the lead in her department. When the play was over a few weeks later, she had gained enough self-confidence to accept an invitation to join the store's choral club. By the time a year and

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a half had passed, she had made a good adjustment and was again wholly adequate in her limited field. Continued misunderstanding and mismanagement might have resulted in shattering her self-confidence so completely that the unfortunate young woman and her now dependent mother would have become public charges.

Instead, Carol Watson became a useful and contented member of the organization. True, she will always be a limited one. Due to the change in character of the merchandise during her ten years' service in one department, she may never be the leader again. The vivid personalities, fast workers, girls with a sense of style, will outdistance the patient, plodding, slow but devoted people. The store needs both types, as does any organization, and it was worth while to trouble about the cause of Carol's sudden difficulties and meet them. The static type of employe who is too limited to plan and carry out a solution for personal problems, can be given enough satisfaction and security in a job to continue to do it well even under changing conditions.

Insecurity may result from a poor departmental set-up. This was proved by an employe of long and faithful service who suddenly began to make an unusual number of errors. When questioned, he finally confessed that he was worried about loss of memory with approaching age. His duties in the department were such that a whole reference system of numbers existed in his memory but nowhere else; the employe saw that as he grew older, his memory might fail him and his faults become glaring. The very fear of this hurried on errors, because his confidence was attacked. A system so dependent on one man was obviously inefficient,

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and when it was amended and the employe exempted from his undue responsibility, his performance regained its old accuracy. He was able to continue on the job for many more years.

Executives who realize the destructive effects of fear sometimes think, "How can I give security to my people in order that they may do better work, when business conditions are such that I have no similar assurance myself?" The point is, that to pass on the feeling of being threatened, in the hope that it will act as a spur to more and better effort on the part of the employes, only defeats its own end.

An atmosphere of confidence can be created even in the presence of serious problems, although only a fairly mature person can achieve this. We see this exemplified in families everywhere. Some parents, in serious circumstances, unload all their burdens on their children, who have to live in the midst of worry and fear until the unfortunate effects, both mental and emotional, often alter their lives permanently. Other parents manage to see that whatever hardships come, they have not been magnified by anticipant dread. Neither a parent nor an executive can promise what he does not know about the future, but he can at least remove the day to day insecurities by not emphasizing the future uncertainty. This does not mean that uncertainty should be ignored. A false optimism can make for insecurity just as much as an attitude of constant foreboding. People need to face the world realistically, but they need not be continually subjected to a harping upon the blackest side of every situation.

The path of the employe in a mediocre type of job is beset with many fears, but this destructive feeling of in-

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security also affects people whose responsibilities are more highly individual. In proportion to the amount of imagination and originality needed for success in their work, there must be security to allow creative qualities to flourish. These are the very characteristics which industry prizes most, yet it does little to encourage them in people who already show them, and even less to develop them in potentially gifted persons. A very few have brought out creative work under adverse circumstances, but a far greater number are submerged in a struggle with insecurity. The loss of their natural abilities falls on business and society, although many are accustomed to think of it simply as the frustration of an individual's talents.

A promising young woman worked her way up in a department store to the position of assistant buyer, by diligent, determined effort. She fell short, however, of the expectations of her superiors, because she did not achieve the fine, creative, imaginative results for which she had all of the potential qualities. Something seemed to hold her back. It was discovered that a personal problem, the financial responsibility for an invalid mother and a younger sister, denied her the mental freedom which she needed in order to progress. She was worried, and although it did not keep her from working hard, it prevented the development of her special abilities. This was shown when her brother got a job and helped to establish the family's economic security. She then attacked her business problems with a new confidence which gave full scope to her creative talents and brought success.

Anyone responsible for people on jobs is constantly making evaluations, of performance in terms of personality. "Smith never does anything on his own. He's the kind of

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person I have to tell just what to do and when to do it." Or: "That Jones girl has a chip on her shoulder. She won't do anything without arguing about it."

It is difference in personality which makes one person on a routine job jittery whenever the foreman comes around, another cranky at being inspected, another steady under all circumstances.

Personality remains a dynamic force, however, despite the retention throughout life of certain early established patterns. Man's personality constantly acts upon those around him, upon his environment, just as things that happen to him, or people who have to do with him, act upon his personality in turn, inhibiting, distorting, or giving expression to it.

Miss Jones' argumentativeness has some influence on the way her boss treats her. It may evoke in him brusqueness and sternness, or it may have any one of a dozen other effects on him, just as his giving her directions brings out her crankiness, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on how he does it and how she happens to feel at the moment. There is always this dynamic relationship between personality and environment.

This has deep implications for the executive who wishes to give his employees security. Not only must he consider how conditions in the job situation—including his own methods of handling—react on individual employees, but he must also take stock of the personalities of his employees as they relate to the job and to him. This becomes doubly important where deep-rooted personality conflicts or problems exist, as they often do in the most normal groups.

In one sales department a young man was put in as assist-



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ant under a brilliant but erratic woman buyer, and did a remarkably good job. He took over the administrative end of the department management, worked out an excellent system of gauging customer demands, and showed an unusual ability in directing the salesclerks, although he was reported to favor the women clerks and to be strict with the men. When his buyer was transferred to another department, a male buyer took her place, also a brilliant person and of strong personality. The assistant seemed to change character overnight. Although he had of his own accord taken over the administrative end of the department, he now began to branch out into the actual buying, with much aggressiveness but little success. He was resentful when the buyer asked him to continue with the management, where he had been so successful. The assistant grew short-tempered with the clerks, especially with the men, becoming dictatorial and overbearing in manner and intolerant of mistakes. The buyer, after a talk with his predecessor in which they compared notes at length, decided that the sudden change in his assistant must have something to do with his own handling of the young man. He attempted to get on a better footing by taking him into his confidence and trying to draw him out, but the assistant was merely haughty and distant.

Finally the buyer asked for help from the Conference Office. The assistant was interviewed, as it happened, by a woman. She observed his manner, at the beginning, to be harassed and somewhat defiant, but he eased considerably as the interview progressed. He was finally drawn into talking about himself, telling with considerable bitterness of his father, who had been harsh and over-stern, whom he had early learned to fear, and whose authority he had al-

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ways resisted. He had attended a military preparatory school, where, under men teachers, discipline had been extremely strict. He had hated it, and the only thing that had kept him going had been the sympathy and understanding of his mother.

The young man's experiences with men, beginning with his father, had been so uniformly threatening that he could have no security as a subordinate to any man, even one so sympathetic as the present buyer. His insecurity manifested itself not only in his attitude to the buyer, but was reflected in his treatment of the salesclerks and in the quality of the work he did.

Similar examples will become familiar to the reader. Yet it is only natural that parental influences should be prominent in most lives, and should appear most often when people are thrust into situations which revive old, deep-seated emotions.

Both men and women can so develop that their security is affected by the sex of their supervisor. This young man, unlike another young man whose envy of his sister did not let him compete with women, resisted masculine discipline. Carol Watson, because of her close tie to her mother, could readjust far more easily under a woman section manager.

Smith, who always has to be told what to do and when to do it, is a typical example of another kind of personality difficulty. He is the adult child.

Some parents are never able to let their children grow up emotionally. They protect them from everything difficult, think for them, plan for them, hover about them in an excess of parental devotion. A child who knows that he can count on his parents for everything has little incentive to ac-

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compish anything on his own. Furthermore, he comes to enjoy praise and approval for being "good" so much that he develops the habit of conforming entirely to his parents' wishes and ways of thinking. He is their victim. He never builds into his personality any real inner security, because he has such complete security in his parents.

This pattern of emotional dependence is apt to be strengthened instead of offset throughout school life, for the docile child who causes the teacher no trouble is often praised and encouraged in the very quality which signifies his immaturity. Even if this were not so, the child feels secure in the protected atmosphere of school life, where tasks are predetermined and supervision is close. Such a child may reach adult stature in physique and intellect, while his emotional age lags far behind. With no inner security born of achievement and self-reliance, he puts complete reliance on outward protection. He often makes an excellent workman, because he is content to accept authority and supervision unquestioningly, and is unlikely to upset the applecart by ill-timed self-assertiveness. In any job he will attempt to set up for himself the outward security which he has always enjoyed. He will rely on the boss completely, will find comfort in set rules to follow. Once he feels as secure in the job as he has felt at home and in school, he can often branch out and take on little extra responsibilities, as did Carol Watson in her sponsoring.

It is sometimes a temptation to supervisors to reward such reliability and devotion with promotion, or with more responsible duties, but they should remember that such persons can advance only slowly if at all. At each point of advancement, they must have, to survive, enough outward security to protect them from their own inadequacy. They have no

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reserve on which to draw for initiative or decisiveness in judgment or risk-taking, and while often good fellows, they are seldom good leaders and seldom can handle people effectively. They are never executive material.

Although the average person thinks of discipline as synonymous with punishment, it need not have this significance. Properly administered it can contribute to a feeling of security rather than uneasiness. Since there must be rules and regulations in business for the same reason that well-regulated traffic makes for the comfort and safety of all, to understand and conform to these rules gives one the feeling that he is doing what is expected. Consequently he feels secure and confident that he will escape censure.

When a worker sells his services to industry he knows that they must be acceptable and that he must subject himself to checking up. But the way in which this is done will count heavily.

Much time and energy is wasted and much poor work done in offices or factories where supervisors stalk around glaring suspiciously at workers, thus inspiring them to see whether they can outsmart the boss. They can outsmart him if the incentive is sufficient challenge to their ingenuity. Even groups which are considered hard-boiled will respond childishly when not treated like adults.

Problems of discipline and supervision will bring us in a later chapter to that question which arises with increasing frequency among executives. How is an employe to remain up on his toes and at the same time be contented in his job after he reaches the point where his position seems to be static? The problem is hard and one which, like many things in life, is not worked out satisfactorily for everyone. On the

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whole it comes nearer to a solution in an organization where supervisors know their people, are honest with them, and let them understand what to expect. On such a basis personal problems can be discussed frankly and a worker may be helped, in many ways, to find satisfaction in the job itself instead of being allowed to mislead himself with false expectations. Here the emphasis must be on present and future security in contrast to vague, wishful dreaming.

The reaction of employees to the personality of their executive is seriously to be reckoned with in every job situation. An extreme illustration of this will later be given, but it occurs commonly enough in business. A new executive is brought in from outside. The whole organization's sense of security is undermined. Executives who thought themselves in line for promotion are apt to be disgruntled and to feel their prerogatives threatened by a new superior. The new superior may want to bring in other people whose work he knows, especially if he intends to make any special changes in policy or procedure. Subordinates all along the line feel threatened for the same reason. There is a general air of walking cautiously to see which way the cat will jump. Some employees will react to the threat by an over-eagerness to get in right with the new boss. Some may refuse cooperation; others may stand off suspiciously. This state of affairs creates a real problem for the new executive, who may otherwise be snowed under with a host of different responsibilities.

The organization will profit if at such times personnel can function smoothly, concentrating not on personal status but on the job of reorganization at hand. The new executive must do nothing to cause uneasiness. The first item on his program should be to find ways of reassuring people at

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once, rather than to wait until he has attended to all of the things which he considers major problems. No matter what these may be, he will need such cooperation as cannot come from workers living in uncertainty and fear.

Where complete reorganization is intended, sometimes a whole group is let go or certain departments are discontinued. The limit of these sweeping changes should be announced so that those who are to be retained will know it and not feel that they too are in constant jeopardy. For a new executive to dismiss so many suggests to the survivors that he has kept them as a skeleton crew until he has learned the ropes. They cannot have confidence and their performance suffers accordingly.

An executive who comes in at the top will need to remember that security is not only a matter of dollars and cents but, also, of feeling that one's value to the organization is recognized. To replace people ruthlessly means that no one's work-history seems to be of the slightest consequence. The result is soon apparent in a general lowering of morale and productiveness. The new executive will need to apply all the leadership he has to counteract the atmosphere of uneasiness and disinterest.

Many simple and obvious things go into the reestablishment of a smoothly running unit. The executive who makes it his duty at the very beginning to know his employes by name and to call them by name, and who takes the trouble to be courteous to the merest stockboy, goes a long way towards creating a secure atmosphere. A new executive can often completely reassure an experienced employe under him by showing an appreciation of his past record and by deferring to his undoubted knowledge of the technique or pro-

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cedure of the department. An executive who says "we" more often than he says "I," implies an equality, an attitude of team work, which is very satisfying to an insecure subordinate.

But a false heartiness, a spurious flattery, is worse than useless under such circumstances. Employees with perception sharpened by the need to know where they stand in the picture, are quick to sense the slightest tinge of insincerity in a new superior. They suspect that the insincerity masks some move detrimental to themselves. They feel their intelligence slighted, and secretly despise one who has to resort to hypocrisy in order to get by.

A man is insecure because general or specific economic conditions threaten him, or because he holds a job for which he is an obvious misfit, or because he does not know his job well enough to perform competently. He may have been advanced beyond his natural capabilities. He may be insecure because he does not trust or understand his supervisor, or he may be employed by a firm that lays off workers without warning, or for reasons of prejudice or favoritism. He may be convinced that he is not well enough known as an individual, or that his work is not sufficiently appreciated to warrant his feeling secure. His insecurity may be the fruit of excessive or destructive criticism and the disturbing supervision of petty executives. He may have personality difficulties that make him inadequate to confront his situation. His earnings may be too far out of line with his needs and standard of living; his work may be seasonal, presenting him with the constant query, What next?

But whatever the cause, his behavior will betray his fear. The problem we shall discuss is how to remove those threats.

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Industry has the power to restore the insecure worker to normal efficiency or to reduce him to the status of hapless John Gordon. The process of redemption, though certainly mandatory, may be long and costly. Perhaps for that reason, if no other, the best cure lies in prevention.



THE BASIC PRINCIPLE: RECOGNITION

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ONE of the most obvious truths of human nature is that everyone welcomes praise. This is usually considered a weakness of the human spirit; rightly seen, it becomes instead one of its strengths. Personality grows out of praise.

From infancy to old age human beings tend to repeat and enlarge any of their performances which have brought them attention. This should not be considered immature behavior. The measure of maturity or immaturity depends upon what suffices to satisfy the need, but the need itself is so fundamental that none is without it. Statesmen and poets are as much its creatures as machinists and sales clerks. It provides much of the human drive, invigorates men with ambition, because it springs from a powerful source, the instinct for self-preservation. It implies an impulse to survive not only as an organism but as an entity. If a man is to live in the world, he must somehow make himself felt as an individual. He is not truly energetic and alive without this need for attention, whether it be favorable or unfavorable; it is the answer to a deep human urge to "be someone," to express one's self as apart, an acknowledged individual separate from all other individuals. We have already seen how this

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affects the new employee. Certainly there is nothing childish in this desire for recognition. It is a condition of man's development to emotional maturity that he shall seek recognition of himself as an entity; to fail to win such recognition is wounding, while to gain it is profoundly pleasing to his personality.

When society intrudes its scale of values, then standards of maturity and immaturity are established. Society awards favorable recognition for those things which are useful to it. Industry, as a part of the social order, acts in the same way, and its standards are perhaps the most inflexible of all. But strangely enough, industry makes little effort to compromise with human frailty by setting up mechanisms for giving rewards as inflexibly as it makes demands, and therein lies the answer to perhaps half the mental and emotional maladjustment in the work-world today.

This is nothing new. It is age-old. There are ancient proverbs that tell the same story. "It is more difficult to praise rightly than to blame," says one.

One can safely say that most normal adults should find their chief satisfaction in work, considering how much of their lives is passed in the industrial world. That so many do not find that pleasure, is often the fault of those who employ them. By this fault industry deprives itself of a great part of its natural efficiency. The loss may be appreciated by a mental comparison of the defeated, routine worker with the man of whom it is said that "he enjoys his work" or that "he certainly gets a lot of fun out of his job." The latter embodies our picture of one who has found satisfaction in his job, confident, eager; one who thoroughly enjoys putting

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across a deal or working out some knotty problem; one who is challenged by obstacles and buoyant in meeting reverses; one who knows his business and likes carrying it through. His number yearly grows smaller, except in pioneering industries such as aviation and kindred fields; for individual craftsmanship, by which each man could once distinguish himself, is fast passing, and the modern average worker has become servant to an impersonal machine or organization or both. His actual work gives him no personal reward, and his identity is swallowed up among the thousands surrounding him.

Yet need his identity be lost and his work develop into nerve-wracking monotony? We have already referred to the sense of prestige some workers derive from their association with a great and successful institution. If by their personal efforts they really contribute to the success of that organization, they are entitled to as much satisfaction as the old-time cobbler discovered in his hand-made shoes. A great store or an immense factory is a much nobler thing to have created, and so it behooves the employer—in a hundred ways—to see that his workers are given a sense of participation.

This would seem evident, yet there are strong opposing forces at play in the work-world. One is a survival of the Puritan rule that to praise a child is to "spoil" him. The contrary may be true. The child ceases to be an obnoxious person when he learns to win approbation by doing something desirable instead of behaving in a way which merely demands attention, and when that approbation is withheld his character is the poorer for it. If from the beginning, genuine, spontaneous approval be given for each little achievement, and a corresponding decrease in attention for unsocial acts,

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a proper pattern for behavior is early established. The child grown to man responds in the same way; there is no surer way of influencing any one than by letting him know that in his own circle certain behavior makes him admired, while the opposite may cause him to be ignored.

Criticism is the antithesis of recognition. But it has been shown that to sum up recognition of some good point in behavior or work puts any person, whether a child or an adult, in a cooperative frame of mind and releases energy for constructive use. Praise for one achievement encourages the recipient to believe that he can accomplish more and stimulates him to raise other phases of his job or personality to the level of whatever qualities earned this commendation. On the other hand, mere criticism without such recognition may only spur on the offender to aggravate his failing.

A situation of this kind developed under a gruff executive who never "spoiled" anyone with a word of praise. He was responsible for sending a young man to the conference office with the complaint that "he is intelligent and a good worker, but he is so conceited and brags so much that he is insufferable. I call him in every day and give him a good, straight talking to, and tell him he is no good. But the more I take him down, the worse he gets. You can't make a dent in his conceit."

"Then why do you keep on trying?" asked the personnel officer.

"If I didn't keep him toned down some, we couldn't stand him," was the somewhat illogical answer.

The story of the young man's life soon gave clues to reasons for his braggadocio. Behind him lay a broken home from which had fled the father he idealized, imbuing the boy with

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a sense of deprivation and a deep resentment that his family life was different from others. From this had followed a real feeling of inferiority in his relations with children whose homes were happier, and compensating habit patterns upon which he increasingly relied. Boasting built up his shaken self-confidence, although it made him objectionable to others, and the more he was threatened on account of the stimulating practice, the more he had to cling to it. He was like a small boy whistling to keep up his courage when he had to walk by a graveyard at night.

The personnel officer summoned the executive, at the same time stifling an impulse to submit the man's gruffness and bullying manner to a like investigation.

"You tried and did not succeed. Now suppose we try another method?"

Grudgingly the man acceded. A plan was formulated and put into execution. First, the boy's job was slightly re-organized so that he was responsible for a definite division and reported to the manager himself; not to a woman subordinate, as formerly. The manager ceased to scold and began to mete out some commendation for work well done. The young man responded instantly; there was no longer any need for him to boast in order to sustain his confidence. But what delighted the personnel office was the change in the manager himself. He was so impressed at this insight into human behavior that little by little his manner altered. In the end, he was the more greatly improved of the pair.

The praise people earn is as much due them as their salary, and the honest employer will pay it.

"Favors out of place I regard as positive injuries," said

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Cicero. And Petrarch observed, "Praises are a spur to virtue, but flatteries are a subtle poison."

Most certainly the kind of recognition we recommend is not haphazard flattery. Deserved recognition is the proper means of obtaining a better performance and fostering a co-operative spirit; indiscriminate praise has a destructive effect on both the individual and the group.

When people of different degrees of proficiency work together, executives must make it clear that they commend a beginner for improvement and an average worker for doing what he is able; but this must be done without an appearance of lowering the standard for more skillful workers. Otherwise the latter would be left with no higher mark to aim at and the consequence would be disintegrating. Those commended for something they have not done, receive no incentive, since they get the reward without earning it. Their fellow workers will naturally be jealous of this undeserved recognition.

The best rule for the executive is that proper approval should be not only a legitimate part of a planned treatment, but a natural reaction to a good job, just as one greets an acquaintance pleasantly without having to stop and think why it should be done. Gracious notice when things are going well relieves employes of the depressing feeling that "I suppose my work is all right because no one has jumped on me."

"You are asking me to praise people," replied one executive, "and I should be very glad to do it. But my girls operate comptometers and bookkeeping machines. They do their work with quiet efficiency, and they know I appreciate it. Beyond that, what is there for me to say?"

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The answer is that the humane and sensitive executive will see many virtues in performance that the less gifted though well-meaning employer will pass by because he takes things for granted. The executive who knows his people understands the hardships which they have overcome. He is on the alert to encourage. He inspires a feeling of good will that is invaluable.

He is helped by other factors that may mitigate the monotony of modern business. One is that many of the most routine jobs are held by young women for whom entrance into the business world, with the independence it brings, affords an entirely new satisfaction. Some measure of this satisfaction is experienced by all workers who can feel that they are taking their place in the world as wage-earners and providers. Another is that even the most humble and thoroughly mechanized task allows room for perfection through manual dexterity that often flatters its possessor. The skilled comptometer operator, her rapid fingers flying, her brain quickly arranging figures, has good reason for pride; her accomplishment requires quicker action than that of the sleight-of-hand artist. It is modern magic. Competence, even in simple routine, is gratifying. All the more important then is proper placement and training; for with the best will in the world, the man with a poor head for figures may be perfectly miserable at his job in the accounting department; the new salesgirl blundering along in a strange section may go home at night with a feeling of utter discouragement; the craftsman, working with antiquated or inadequate tools, or following an inefficient schedule, may become irritated almost past endurance. There is no tacit self-approval for them.

Nor, in the long run, is any self-engendered approval ever

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enough, even for the artist working alone. He must hear from his audience. The workman who has made a new record on production feels a glow of satisfaction in his accomplishment, but he quickly goes on to the thought of the recognition which his achievement may bring him. He, John Jones, has pulled it off. If he keeps that up, the boss will take notice, perhaps he will be made foreman. But what if the executive does not know enough about John Jones's job to appreciate that he has set a production record? The manager must be able to recognize and murmur a word of gratitude when the comptometer operator has done more than her day's turn.

"The chances are, if you think your girls work along in mere quiet efficiency, that you do not know all there is to know about their jobs. Day in and day out, there are bound to be many upsets in routine and fluctuations in the volume of bills handled, and inevitably some girls must perform better than others. Yet you are viewing them as a whole, as an 'office,' blurring their faces. Sometime they will resent that. The best workers are not duly noticed. After a while they will deem themselves foolish, under the circumstances, and slow down."

Because of this human desire for recognition, the good executive must be able to approach each member of his staff separately. In one ready-to-wear department, a buyer who had herself been a salesgirl did much towards promoting the satisfaction of her force by her discriminating notice of individual skill. "Miss Jones," she would say, "is a 'whizz' at selling markdowns; she acts as though she wished she could buy the dress herself, and the customer gets the idea of a bargain without anything being said." Or, "Miss Brown never



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has to show more than two dresses to any customer; she knows just what each one is likely to want." Or, "I can always count on Miss Smith in a rush; she can handle four customers at once."

The salesgirls in this department varied greatly in selling ability. Yet each felt her little specialty was appreciated by the buyer, and the result was a devotedly loyal, eager group, on tiptoe to do a good job, and happy in the doing of it.

A picture of the same department under the previous buyer was quite different. The force, with one or two exceptions, was the same, but the girls grumbled and were quarrelsome and jealous. Many were older women, who had once cherished vain hopes of advancement and had sunk into a state of querulous resignation. All were nervous and jumpy under the buyer's driving demand for more and more volume. Other factors affected this situation, but the attitude of the girls typified what might develop where no job satisfaction prevailed. Their work was slovenly; when they thought they had sold enough to satisfy the buyer for that day, they loafed along, neglectful of stock work, occupied only in the petty bickerings which lent zest to their dull, driven existences. Significantly, most of their conversation when amicable was of outside matters, dates, excursions, boy-friends, children; and when quarrelsome, about volume figures and sales-grabbing. Because the buyer, herself harassed and intent on the department balance sheet, was interested in them only as producers of this or that volume total, they found nothing satisfying within the job to talk about, and their only concern was in the fierce competition of piling up their share—but no more—of the sales.

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The new buyer did not consciously set out to provide job satisfaction for her girls. She had, however, a special interest in the technique of selling; from her own experience she knew that different people had different methods and abilities, and she wanted to use those varying skills in the way which would most surely sell her merchandise. Thus she regarded and studied the girls as individuals with something personal to contribute to the running of the department. An index that her methods actually did provide job satisfaction was found in the girls' casual conversation; much of it was still concerned with outside affairs, but there was also a good deal of talk about the merchandise, the customers, this or that experience in selling. Definitely when people talk "shop" they are interested in their work.

There are boundless benefits to an organization inherent in a widespread policy of recognition. An example was an executive, a firm believer in the value of approval in personnel handling and adept at devising ways to give prestige to routine jobs, who observed a well-arranged display in the grocery department. He asked who had done it. This first bit of recognition encouraged the young salesgirl to further efforts. The executive then gave her steamer baskets to fill and decorate. When she made them up well, she was praised, and this led her to develop a latent style sense she had never known she possessed. As she continued to show creative ideas under the stimulus of earned approval, she became more valuable to the department and finally won a promotion as assistant in display in another department where there was more scope for her capabilities. This little drama was watched by her fellow-clerks and the general morale of the department

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was heightened when it was seen that one could earn advancement.

Some successful organizations have paid their respects to this human desire to preserve individuality with minor but astonishingly effective strategies. The results are illustrative. A name plate on one's desk means that one is no longer a cog in the machine. This principle has been applied to people in lesser positions. One bus line in New York City furnishes each conductor with a small bar on which is his name, worn like a war decoration above the breast pocket. This company emphasizes the comfort and courtesy of its transportation, for which it charges more than competing street cars or subways. It may be that the flower of chivalry has been culled by this bus company, but the fact remains that its Mr. Patrick O'Brien or Mr. Thomas Kelly are unfailingly the perfect hosts, while numbered conductors on other bus routes, street cars, subways and elevated lines are not more courteous and considerate than run-of-the-mill mortals. In Macy's, when each colored elevator man goes on duty, he hangs in his car a large, framed card bearing his name and pledge of good service. In his smart uniform, the man feels himself someone identifiable, not just part of a machine.

Street cleaning was considered the dregs among occupations and the workers looked as if they were recruited from the derelict class. When neat, white uniforms were supplied, a better class of men were attracted to join the ranks; no longer were they just discouraged individuals standing alone in the gutter, but respectable members of a recognized branch of the city organization. The ruling motives of human beings are alike whether one man's title be president of the cor-

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poration or he be a mere member of a group euphoniously called White Wings.

There are varying needs for recognition. The patterns established to fulfill individual demands for ego satisfaction, begun in infancy, are grooved or deflected during childhood and adolescence, until by adulthood they form a definite part of the mature personality. While all are motivated to express themselves as individual entities, some develop a more intensive drive than do others. The aggressive boys of good education but poor social background belong to this class. In well-adjusted adults is found a sustained drive towards self-maximation along with and intermingled with a steady stream of outgoing impulses. These include the love or creative impulses. Where for some reason the outgiving, or love, impulses are thwarted or remain undeveloped, the ego impulses take on intensified strength, and produce the overly egocentric person; the opposite unbalance results in the irresponsible, ineffectual person who never finishes what he starts, if he starts anything at all, and whose ego satisfactions remain on a highly infantile level. Neither is desirable. One is likely to be the overly ambitious executive prone to tantrums, a reversion to his successful method of getting his way in childhood. The other is the hopeless drifter.

There are also those whose lives have been so barren of ordinary satisfactions that they have developed a rebellious outlook. Those who live on the marginal level of economic subsistence, who have had to fight grimly for every little advantage gained, may well come to their job with the fighting habit, ready to stand up for themselves at the drop of a

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hat, suspicious of a fair play they have never known. Where the struggle for mere existence has been bitter, the feeling about a job is intense, and the demands of personality on that job are proportionately more grasping.

In any office we see examples of this psychological compensation. The man who is hen-pecked struts. The short man may counteract his physical insignificance by wearing gaudy clothes or acting pompously. Even when we see a subordinate aping his superior, it will usually be found that he does so in an effort to heighten his own status.

All men do not seek ego satisfaction in their work; they may turn in other directions. An outlet through proficiency in sports is perhaps the most common. Feats of daring, the exercise of charm, the pursuit of hobbies; even, sometimes, the commission of crimes, may be expressive of a need to draw attention to one's personality. Yet because work is almost identical with the struggle for economic existence, it is salutary and most natural for industry to be the scene of men's search for self-expression. The struggle for economic existence and the search for recognition are closely allied. Reward, in terms of money, is only a symbol. Once the minimum necessities for living are assured, the paycheck becomes important chiefly because it makes possible the enlargement of satisfactions outside the work life. Good pay means more comfort, more possessions, more entertainment, perhaps education for the children, advancement in social position, and widened opportunity for self-development. Thus we return to the central idea behind job satisfaction—the enhancement of individuality. This motive is implied by the worker who complains, "I'm worth more than that." He may think he

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means that the quality of his work entitles him to more, but actually it is himself as a person that concerns him.

Thus recognition, or satisfaction in the job, is seen to be basal. There can be no successful personnel work where it is not provided.

The mechanisms that can be set up by industry to see that recognition is justly awarded should be such that their workings are known to employees. Recognition should not descend like manna from heaven; the worker wants to know when and how he may expect it. One method devised and well-proved is that already described in the chapter on the new employee—the assurance that each and every worker has contact with the high officials of his organization, those who give out raises and promotions, through his own immediate superiors, whose reports will be solicited; that at regular intervals he will be called for a salary review and general job rating, wherein he will be allowed an opportunity to explain his side of the story, should there be any differences between his immediate superiors and himself. He can depend upon a clear picture of how his performance is regarded. This brings everything out into the open in a formal and dignified way and gives even the most static employee an immediate objective constantly renewed.

The virtues of this system of reviews at stated intervals can scarcely be exaggerated, and they apply equally to small organizations. It removes the question forever hovering over the worker as to whether or not he should ask for a salary increase. He knows that some employers will never give raises unless they are demanded, and respect men who place a high value on their services; while other employers resent

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such requests, preferring to have the increase come from the management as a voluntary award. The average worker only learns into which category his employer falls by the uncomfortable process of trial and error.

"Should I ask for a raise? Perhaps I could be getting more money all this time, if I only let the office know that I think myself worth it."

This preys on the worker's mind. In such organizations, when one hardy spirit does finally approach his employer and emerges successful, the word spreads and a wave of requests for raises by the more timid immediately follows. The annual or semi-annual salary review does away with these periodic emanations of discontent. At the review, a salary increase may not be granted but at least the reasons for withholding it are told, whether they be personal ones or those of organization policy that apply in times when business is poor. Any pent-up emotion is released.

The larger the organization, the more difficult will be the problem of the accurate rating to which the employee is entitled, because here personal observation must be replaced by second and third-hand information from department managers and section foremen. To obviate the possibility of bias, not only should the characteristics of these minor executives be well-known, but each rating should be arrived at in a meeting between all those in supervisory positions who come into contact with the employee, and comparisons should be drawn. At the same meeting, constructive suggestions for the betterment of the employee's performance should be put forward.

Finally, it falls to the lot of the employee's immediate superior, who has been at the meeting, to acquaint him with

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the findings and decision, discussing this with the employe in private conference. The employe then goes to the personnel office for a second discussion, which may be a brief recapitulation of the praise or blame, or may be the start for a longer inquiry. In this way the employe knows in advance what the personnel office will have to say and will not be taken unawares while under nervous strain, without time to offer a frank and complete explanation if one is needed. Nor, since his immediate superior has stated his opinion openly, can he harbor a feeling that he has been spied upon and secretly maligned.

The private conference establishes the authority of the immediate superior, and at the same time reassures the employe that someone close to him, under whose eyes he is working, has much to say in the matters of his wage and progress. An unfavorable report may give birth to resentment, but this resentment would be felt in either event and is better faced. Nor need it cause resentment if the criticism be delivered in an encouraging and constructive vein. This leads us to a discussion of the criticism interview.



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ONCE John Gordon and Jean Coles, Alice Jones and Mary Smith have been wisely chosen, placed and trained, many difficulties calling for personnel treatment will still confront them during their working lives. Human beings are not machines, although machines often receive more attention. One is reminded of the observation that George Bernard Shaw placed in the mouth of his stingy Napoleon: "I am careful of everything except human life, because human life is the one thing that can take care of itself." This Napoleonic assumption on the part of industry is a proved fallacy, of course, like so many other Napoleonic dogmas.

The complex and delicate human machinery that has progressed so smoothly, suddenly performs unaccountably. The disturbance may be momentary and trivial.

Tom should have been attending to his duties as a stock boy but instead was flipping little wads of paper at another lad. An executive on his rounds of the floor observed this. His first impulse was to reprove Tom, but he decided to learn more about the boy from those who were in a position to see him daily. All said that they had never seen anything amiss in his behavior before; few boys were more diligent than

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Tom. Mr. Hill dismissed the incident from his mind. But a few moments later, he chanced to look at Tom, and Tom saw him. Another wad flew. Seemingly nothing deterred Tom. It was strange, open defiance of authority. This flagrant disrespect would have been enough for Mr. Hill to say angrily to the boy: "You're through." But he did not.

The executive controlled himself because his position was such that he did not have to rush to the defense of his dignity, even though several of his subordinates had seen it disregarded. He waited until Tom had finished gathering the merchandise he had been sent to collect. When Mr. Hill saw the side of the boy's face which had been turned away from him, he noticed that it was badly swollen and inflamed.

"Come here, Tom. Something is the matter with your cheek. Have you been to a doctor?"

"No, sir. But I'm going to have a tooth operated on this evening."

The executive told the boy to report to the Hospital at once and excused him for the rest of the day, adding: "From what I have been told, you're one of the best boys we have." He did not mention Tom's behavior.

When Tom returned to work, he came to the man who had seen him misbehave and said, "Mr. Hill, if you had fired me, I could not have said anything. But I have been trying to think why I acted that way. I had been leaning over some boxes on the floor and that made the pain in my face so much worse that it seemed as if I could not stand it another second. Just to stop thinking about it for a minute, I did the first thing that came into my head and threw papers at some of the fellows. Then, when I saw you, I thought it was all up with me. I felt desperate, so I didn't stop. I thought you

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would fire me anyway. I want to thank you for giving me another chance. You won't regret it."

This demonstrates the modicum of truth contained in the Latin proverb, "Great fear is often concealed by a show of daring." Most employers know that insubordination on the job is rare and deserves thorough investigation when it manifests itself. A hot-headed response is never the right one.

This little incident, for example, deepened Tom's loyalty not only to the executive but to the whole organization. The matter was small, but it would not have been trivial to Tom if he had lost his job.

Another executive complained that his secretary dressed in a manner unbecoming to business. This embarrassed him, but he did not know how to tell her. He finally found an excuse and let her go. How much better it would have been for the girl if this executive had possessed enough objectivity to have handled the situation in a different way.

Among the sales clerks on the fourth floor was a girl who made a dreadful first impression. She looked like a Spanish "blues" singer. Her hair was in a low evening knot, magnificently swooping about her ears. Her eyes were loaded with shadow and mascara and she wore a black satin dress that revealed every line of her rather voluptuous figure. This girl had been hired for the Christmas rush and had astonished everyone by her sales volume. She had an amazing love of selling and did not even want to leave the floor to go to lunch. The head of the department was of two minds about her.

"You are one of the most promising saleswomen in the department, and the buyer has spoken to me about you," explained the young woman personnel officer, when the girl

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was summoned for an interview. "We would like to keep you on, but the only trouble is that you're almost too pretty, and judging from the way you are dressed, it seems that you are not interested in entering on a business career permanently."

"But I love to sell! I should like to stay."

"Well, let's see. Perhaps it could be arranged," speculated the personnel officer, as though entering a conspiracy. "You could dress more conservatively, so that you would look as though you were really taking business seriously instead of doing it for fun. You had better leave off make-up, although I shouldn't be surprised that your eyes would be even prettier that way. . . ."

The girl probably knew she was being criticized but could not be altogether sure; even so, she had been complimented on her ability and her appearance, and she was grateful that her pride did not force her to defend herself or submit to the suggestions with embarrassment. She also appreciated that the interviewer's interest was a friendly one and responded to it, and with a frankness engendered by this mutual feeling the interviewer ended the meeting by discussing a few more intimate details. The interview terminated very happily and effectively.

There was also the case of Lucy Piper. It was a byword in the department that Lucy could sell anything. Lucy would have been a sponsor but for one fault. She was talkative, unbusinesslike; she interfered with the work of the other clerks by constant gossiping; she was always promoting some minor intrigue. She had received a good many criticisms upon her talkativeness, but without results.

After five years, Lucy waxed resentful. She went to her

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training supervisor, cited her record, and declared that she felt entitled to a sponsorship. The supervisor listened to the long story and talked about the qualities needed in a sponsor. Would Lucy have them? Lucy said the training supervisor "would see."

Lucy was interested in the prestige and not the qualities of a sponsor. There continued to be trouble with her. Three months later a new girl complained that Lucy was ordering her around like a slave. The training supervisor called Lucy in and referred to the complaint, endeavoring to enlist her sympathies by explaining how new people were not sure of themselves and needed the help of the more experienced girls. She intimated that Lucy had probably not realized this and that accounted for her mistaken and impatient attitude. Lucy was furious; the complaint was all lies; she demanded to know who had made it. After the interview she went back to the department, tried to find out who had complained, and sought to justify herself.

Again Lucy was sent for. But this time the training supervisor realized what was the matter with Lucy and had a concrete incident to serve as an example. Lucy had plenty of self-confidence in selling, but with the other girls she was a child trying to win their favor by performing for their benefit. The childishness of her behavior was illustrated to Lucy: Only a child would have gone back to the person who had complained, to ask what she said and why; a mature person accepted criticism, was sorry, and saw that the fault was not repeated. By acting as she had, Lucy had brought the attention of the whole department to the rebuke, the one thing the store had not wanted, because of the respect her superiors had for her selling ability. Lucy was impressed by this

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compliment and the store's solicitude on her behalf; she saw that she had acted childishly and that her actions had achieved the very opposite of her aim. One thing was immediately noticeable: Lucy became more interested in continuing to hold the store's favor than in winning the girls' attention. Her conduct greatly improved; she applied herself more than ever to her selling until she exceeded all hopes and not merely qualified for a sponsorship but later for a position in the training department, where she taught others something of the high selling skill her concentration had developed.

Lucy's problem, minor though it might seem, was yet of value to the organization in enabling this girl, with her superior selling talent, to function at top level. Personnel economy is built out of the careful, sympathetic handling of many small cases. Patience is demanded. The two interviews with Lucy occurred several months apart; during that time, the supervisor had occasional short contacts with the girl; each contributed something to the happy result. A virtue of the supervisor's handling lay in her refusal to nag at Lucy. Nor did she talk too much or too long at one time. The choice of one or two points to highlight and stress, rather than the presentation of a host of criticisms and suggestions, was a necessary part of the interviewer's technique. Though tempted to get all the unpleasant items off at one swoop, the interviewer knew that would not have been wise. The keen supervisor quickly learns that a little criticism goes a long way. The employe's acceptance of a small suggestion and his success with it encourages him to face and master more serious ones subsequently.

Many of these small difficulties can be treated in such ways by the immediate superior. They will often be brought up

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for discussion at rating time. One of the rules laid down in the previous chapter was that the superior's rating interview with the employe is always followed by the worker's reporting to the personnel office. This second interview is chiefly to confirm the rating, but when serious maladjustments exceeding the scope of the immediate superiors are involved, the interview may be expanded into an investigation.

The diagnostic (or fact-finding) interview is basically related to the hiring interview, but now there is much more definite information available, a history of actual performance, and facts can be substituted for conjecture. The interview had best be marked by openness. Frankness on the part of the interviewer usually brings forth a frank response, and the foundation is laid for a clearer understanding. That is to say, the interviewer had better not attempt to be tricky, for a deliberate device to trick a person into saying or doing something which puts him at a disadvantage is provocative of anything but cooperation, and such an interview fails utterly in the long run.

In any interview, fear is a distorting influence. Too often, the mere being "sent for" inspires an employe with a terror that something is wrong. Once more the primary effort must be to establish an atmosphere of informality and ease that bridges the difficult first minutes. Comments on the weather, so prevalent in the opening of almost any social gathering, often serve this purpose.

"I hope this rain is not going to spoil the week-end. I had planned so and so. Do you ever go to the country week-ends?"

The employe murmurs a polite answer and sits back, his tense nerves relaxing.

Then the interviewer approaches the subject at hand. Prob-

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ably, after that, he need only be a good listener. Most people are only too willing to talk about themselves if given an opportunity, and the resourceful interviewer encourages the speaker to talk freely and not always confine himself to the immediate problem. Yet the interviewer must remain in control; his is the responsibility for the success of the meeting. The employe may be allowed to wander far afield to tell his story in his own way, but the main objective is never forgotten. Infrequent though questions may be, they are always directed toward the goal. This is where the interviewer displays skill. His questions should be adroit, not obvious. He waits. He does not jump at conclusions too quickly, or rush in at the first clue. That way he may arrive at a too hasty conclusion. Once the clue receives some substantiation, conversation is turned into that channel by an unobtrusive comment. Sometimes, as in prospecting, the investigator has to seek here and there. If he finds one point defended, he does not try to dig. Instead he approaches from another side. The end desired is to get the speaker himself to reveal what personality trait is involved. In some instances the interviewer cannot attain his objective without going all around the old red barn, but regardless of how many detours he has to make, by keeping his destination in view, he usually reaches it.

All discussion should be kept unemotional. In heated argument or controversy, the interviewer loses some measure of his control of the situation, and his own emotion obscures his vision. By allowing too much of his own personality to enter the conversation, he lets drop hints to the eager employe as to what answers may be the most politic. A frank revelation is then impossible of achievement. The employe is more anxious



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to please than to be open. This is another reason for indirection in questions, for leading questions that suggest an acceptable reply get the interviewer nowhere. He might as well give the employe sums to do with all the answers supplied at the back of the book.

The best clue at any time is defensiveness. This reaction is easily discerned. The woman hesitates at mentioning her age. The salesman bites his lip when confessing his lack of education. The young man is reticent about his religion, fearing that he may be discriminated against because of it. What is of special interest to the interviewer is not so much what handicaps the speaker has, but how he responds to them. These responses are indications of his general adjustment and the way in which he copes with difficulties.

Interpretation is admittedly delicate. Without a sound understanding of the mechanics of human emotion even the most gifted interviewer is helpless. Without integrity he is dangerous. With both he is invaluable. He needs constantly to be honestly critical of his own deductions, constantly to check and verify his impressions and intuitions against the factual material before him. If he is lazy and slipshod in his thinking he will find himself caught in innumerable mistakes. For this task he must be guided by a driving curiosity about the teleological workings of the human mind. He is like the prospector avid for precious ore, who must know the conditions under which it is apt to be found, how it looks in its natural state, and how to test its components in a fragment. The interviewer must be as expert as the prospector if he is to make many strikes.

Criticism is not always outspoken. When a superior un-

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failingly shows appreciation for work well done, there is an implied criticism should he be silent. At such times the lack of approval may become an incentive, provided the employe knows how to earn the desired recognition. Those who habitually use recognition as a constructive means of inducing better performance, find that they have a decreasing need for criticism to keep employes in line. Or they solve small problems by tactful and helpful suggestions. To a slow sales-girl, they do not say, "You're no good at stock work; you'll have to speed up if you expect to stay on." That contains a harmful threat, gives no loopholes, shows no way to do better work. The man would never think of slapping the girl's face for poor stock work, yet such criticism is a slap in the face to her personality. Some demonstration would be far better. "If you do your stock work this way, it will leave you more free for selling. I think you prefer selling, don't you?" This contains no threat but focuses the criticism on a desirable goal.

But there are cases in which implied criticism or mere tact in suggestion is not enough. Some workers are lazy and slow. Some day-dream. Others present a poor appearance, make unfortunate impressions on customers, or fail to get along with their associates. Still others are "grabbers" whose aggressiveness stirs resentment. There are workers who seem unable to perform their jobs or who commit excessive errors. Some are energetic but waste time because they are too talkative. Finally, some are dishonest.

These are some of the reasons why people are sent to the personnel office. With the exception of dishonesty—which industry still refuses absolutely to condone, although it may arise from easily remedied causes—nearly all these faults can

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be minimized by patient examination and direction. Even when the faults are slight, they may be symptoms of deep rooted disarrangements with possibilities of more serious trouble in the future.

Laziness may be the result of an undetected physical ailment that is sapping the worker's normal energy. Day-dreaming may indicate wrong placement, with the consequence that the worker turns from the monotony of his task to find his satisfaction in optimistic reverie. A hostile attitude toward customers often betokens physical weariness which may result from overwork in a department insufficiently staffed; or a temperamental inability of the saleswoman to be objective enough, to take an impersonal attitude and accept rebukes with a realization that this is merely one of the discomforts of business. Lucy Piper was a talkative person who discovered the motive for her weakness.

Whenever possible the personnel officer will send the employe back to his department after the interview and send for his superior. If there is need for constructive treatment and the superior can be shown how to accomplish it, he is the better person. He has intimate contact with the employe, whereas the personnel office seldom has. Some employes resent having to report to a personnel office for the continued discussion of their problems, or else they become inordinately fond of doing so, and neither condition is wholesome. The agency of the immediate superior is preferable, and the experience may also be illuminating to him and teach him more about the wise handling of people.

In one department an excellent salesclerk surpassed all her co-workers in selling but made an unusual number of errors in addresses and checks. Because of her really fine sales-

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manship the manager took a special interest in trying to eliminate this constant source of annoyance. He called the clerk to his office every now and then to point out errors of hers that had accumulated since their last conversation. By this method he hoped to keep her mindful of her shortcomings so that she would be more careful. She understood his purpose and did not appear to object to his frequent criticisms which she said were deserved. When he finally realized that there was no improvement, he appealed to the personnel office for counsel. Acting on their advice, he sent for the salesclerk but did not interview her in his customary way. He began by speaking of her successful sales record and asked how she achieved it. Soon they were discussing how to fathom the customer's response and suit the sales method to different sorts of customers. The girl excelled at this, and as the subject was vitally interesting to both of them, the manager had no difficulty in getting her to talk. She saw that her information seemed worth while to him. At the end of their conversation he again congratulated her on her grasp of salesmanship. The girl knew that she merited his approval on that score, but she was so accustomed to censure in his office that she felt obliged to remind him of what he had apparently overlooked. She made a reference to her errors, but he received it casually, asking her what she thought might be the cause. She offered some vague suggestions, but the manager was careful to show more interest in her successes than in her failures.

A day or two later she came to his office uninvited; she had been thinking about why she made so many errors. She discussed the problem of her carelessness, and in her efforts to plan her own improvement, she found the manager as interested and courteous as when she had given him her help-

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ful ideas about selling. He dropped his previous attempts to change her and let all the endeavor come from her, making her feel that he considered her a person of such ability that her plans along any line were likely to work out successfully. Most important of all, he resisted the temptation to say or imply "I told you so."

When they met after that, the manager did not allude to her errors, but let her introduce the subject and tell how she analyzed her difficulties and what steps she was taking to correct them. His appreciation of her as a superior worker gave her an incentive to raise all of her performance to the high level of her salesmanship. That she was working on a plan of her own was a challenge, and before long she was able to call the manager's attention to her improvement.

The personnel office could never have achieved this as easily. In reporting the case, the manager commented that he had thought he might have to let this valuable sales person go because of the troublesome habits his mistaken insistence had fastened upon her. He said he was reminded of learning to ride a bicycle. When he fixed his eyes on a tree in order to avoid hitting it, he usually ran right into it, but when he watched where he wanted to go, the tree was not in his way. The clerk made errors because her thoughts were constantly directed toward her obstacles rather than toward the desired goal. Those who are frequently reminded of their faults form the habit of thinking of themselves as people who make certain mistakes. If Mother's refrain is that arithmetic is Johnny's worst subject, the chances are that Johnny's arithmetic will remain poor.

The manager had done more than merely redirect the attention of the salesgirl, although this was an important part of

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his plan. At the beginning he may not have known enough of the girl's personality patterns to anticipate how she would respond to his changed manner, but he showed an awareness that those forces existed. What he really did was to cease to treat the salesgirl as a naughty child to be scolded for mistakes and to approach her as an adult.

This shift in relationship from parent-child to one of equality served to free whatever forces of personality had been bottled up under the manager's previous domination. By implication it put the problem squarely on the girl's own shoulders, where it should have rested all along. The habit of the old relationship drove her, towards the close of the first interview, to an attempt to go back to it, and she herself brought up the subject of the errors. But the manager received this sally noncommittally. He refused to deviate from his new attack, and the girl thenceforward played the role of adult successfully.

The temptation to claim power is naturally attractive to anyone. Quite human is the desire to feel that one exerts influence over other people and through sympathetic insight and intelligent handling has been instrumental in leading them to do better. In successful treatment this temptation should be resisted. The other man should be allowed to think the idea is wholly his own. To overpress an idea, to urge this or that change, often defeats the purpose, since the impulse is strong within most people to do for themselves. The executive, having treatment in mind, keeps in the background himself and acts only as a catalytic agent. He becomes a real developer of people.

The object of treatment interviewing on the job is therefore less to change the individual than to remove obstacles

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in the way of his changing himself. What one can aspire to, practically, is to help a worker face reality, to help him gain some insight into his performance, and to give him the stimulus toward new behavior. Beyond this, the treatment interview in industry is limited in its possibilities. No executive need hope to make over an emotionally dependent person into an emancipated adult, or to turn a fundamentally insecure person into a competent, self-confident member of society, merely by engaging in conversations with him. Mere talking about behavior nine times out of ten will have no permanent corrective effect; it must be coupled with directed action. Where deep-seated feelings of insecurity, fear, or inadequacy are indicated, discussion of, or even reference to these feelings should be avoided, unless the employe himself brings up the subject. To harp on them, even to try to interpret them to the person involved, will more than likely only increase them. Intensive treatment of fundamental personality difficulties through interviewing has no place in a business set-up. The roots underlying behavior are often so ramified and intertwined that they are not accessible to modification except at the hands of a trained therapist, and the handling of such problems should be left to properly qualified experts.

Similarly criticism, either expressed or implied, is useless in cases of original limitations, whether of personality, aptitude, or education. When people have been carefully trained and do the best they can, nothing more can be expected of them. They can go no further. If a tall man is needed in a certain place, only a tall man should be employed, or else a short fellow should be given a box to stand on. But the short man without the box cannot be blamed for failure to measure up to the requirements. The facts about physical equipment are

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obvious. They are equally true of mental and emotional characteristics.

The interviews we might describe under the heading "treatment" interviews would all be considered absurdly superficial by the clinical psychiatrist, and rightly so. Yet industry can justifiably borrow some of the principles which the psychiatrist uses in intensive therapeutic interviewing. They have indeed been borrowed for the fact-finding, or diagnostic, interviews where an attempt is made to read below surface manifestations of personality. The psychiatrist allows his patient to tell his story in his own way; the industrial treatment interviewer will do the same. The psychiatrist maintains an utter objectivity of attitude; the industrial treatment interviewer will strive for that. As psychiatry may use praise but never blame, so industry puts emphasis on encouragement. The psychiatrist seeks to build upon the constructive aspects of his patient's personality; industry should attempt to find something helpful in the job that will contribute to an employee's psychological good health. Perhaps this might be better called some form of mental hygiene.

One may consider a case wherein constructive planning and sympathetic interviewing combined happily to salvage a section manager who had hovered for years on the brink of dismissal.

On several occasions Miss Kirtland had been punished by demotion. She would show improvement for a short time, but then her faults would reappear.

When criticized she became emotional, cried, made excuses, refused to believe that people were being fair to her.

A new supervisor of section managers, recently transferred



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to Miss Kirtland's floor, read her latest rating: "General improvement until April, when we find unsatisfactory, contradictory behavior; good work but wrong attitude. Many complaints from customers. Probably dismissed next Salary Review unless decided change."

The new supervisor studied this vexing record and decided to postpone interviewing Miss Kirtland until he had himself observed her performance. One thing in the rating annoyed him, and that was the use of the word "attitude." He could think of no description more vague; to all complaints of a "wrong attitude" he insisted upon a more accurate definition. This brought to light the specific fault and generally suggested the remedy. On the floor he noticed that Miss Kirtland was at her best directing the sales clerks, that she was then quick, efficient, authoritative but considerate enough. At her desk she appeared to be absorbed in her books, which she handled deftly and neatly, finishing in a surprisingly short time. The supervisor could understand how in the past Miss Kirtland had been in charge of larger departments. Her abilities should certainly be made more use of even now. But with customers and superiors her difficulties became apparent. She would walk about the floor with a manner that made her appear cocky and indifferent, and when approached with merchandise to be exchanged, would look at the hapless customer with an expression which clearly said, "You poor idiot, why can't you make up your mind?" With her superiors she assumed an almost defiant air, although when chatting with her confreres off the subject of work, she was full of wit and sparkle.

The new supervisor observed that for Miss Kirtland the

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world was divided into two classes of people, and that customers and her superiors were grouped together in the second of these. On the one hand were those who worked under her, with whom she was wholly successful in her relations, and on the other those above her, toward whom she showed a defiance that was probably defensive. Since she dropped this defense in private conversations, the trouble did not lie deep in her personality but superficially in her work situation. She resented customers because she had repeatedly been told that she did not handle them well, and they made trouble for her. Probably her original failure had been a wrong approach to customers, and this had been harped upon so much, bringing with it criticism and demotion, that she had lost confidence in her capability of solving the problem, while her irritable manner and sulky attitude had been intensified and grooved into a habit. She could not help being defensive with customers; they were a threat.

It was different with the salesgirls. They were not in a position to criticize, or else they had reason to respect her virtues, since their departmental relationship was so successful. The supervisor realized that Miss Kirtland's really excellent performance had gone unrewarded, while her faults had been constantly emphasized. She compensated herself for this by a show of disinterest and even disdain toward her superiors. She might like them individually, but as a class they were hostile and definitely did not appreciate her work. The supervisor differed from them in this; he was anxious to restore Miss Kirtland to a larger department at the earliest opportunity, because quite selfishly he wanted to take full advantage of her talents, and with this in mind interviewed her.

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His opening comment, that he had noticed from her record that she had received several demotions but never a promotion, released a flood of resentful complaints against the store, the work, the executives. The supervisor listened attentively, and when Miss Kirtland paused for breath, he said matter-of-factly that he himself felt she had the capacity to handle a larger department. He had observed her at work and had been very pleased with the job she was doing. At this point, as the supervisor remarked afterwards, he was afraid Miss Kirtland was going to cry; so he seized upon the first thing that occurred to him and embarked upon a detailed account of praiseworthy actions he had noticed. Miss Kirtland soon broke in with some ideas she had for reorganizing department coverage, and the talk veered to a discussion of the function of section managers, in which Miss Kirtland showed an intelligent grasp of store problems and some vision in analyzing them.

This heightened her confidence—she was enjoying her moment of success—and the supervisor climaxed it by telling her that he planned her promotion to a larger department when a suitable opening occurred. He rose to terminate the interview. As he accompanied Miss Kirtland to the door, he said suddenly that he felt she had allowed her manner to get in her way and give a false impression, adding that there were two people in her, as in everyone—the one she thought herself, the other people saw in her—that undoubtedly she was interested in the customers, but her face did not show it. The old familiar pout puckered Miss Kirtland's face, whereupon the supervisor laughed, saying that was just what he meant. She could not help laughing at this herself. He

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suggested that she consciously try to make her face look as if she were interested, and confided that he could sympathize with her because he himself had to struggle with the same difficulty.

Several months passed before Miss Kirtland got her larger department, but her efforts to look and act pleasant were noticeable at once. She had been given a constructive impulse for meeting customers. Toward her superiors she no longer had to be on the defensive, for her motive had been removed. Subsequently she handled her new and larger job with every success.

The interview is interesting. Instead of confronting her with the usual list of complaints from her superiors, the supervisor approached the problem from her side. When she burst out against the store he let her talk freely. Recognizing the need of releasing her pent-up feelings, he neither took her to task for her complaints, nor made the mistake of sympathizing with them; he dismissed the matter and went on to praise the good points of her performance. Miss Kirtland may well have felt almost overcome by this, after her past experiences. With her tension thus relaxed, she was able to enter into the interview on a give and take basis, and her intelligent contribution to the discussion confirmed the supervisor's evaluation of her capabilities, strengthening his resolve. He deliberately did not discuss Miss Kirtland's "poor attitude," and his one reference to it on the way to the door was made to appear as an afterthought, and was so phrased as to give Miss Kirtland something definite to work on. His use of identification, in telling her of his own efforts to look pleasant, was an excellent stroke. It helped to break down

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that barrier of dissatisfaction and rebuke that had separated her from her superiors until now.

Everyone kept coming with stories about a boy in a certain department. He was slow to answer questions, hesitated to approach customers, made many system errors. Several customers complained that he was stupid, and asked for another clerk.

He was found to be a college student selling on part time. The university maintained its own vocational bureau to which ratings were sent. There it was learned that a professor who knew the boy's father had talked to him about the report and, in the professor's own words, "just given him hell."

The boy came back very upset and spoke to the supervisor about the ratings.

The supervisor learned the following facts about him: His father was a professor in a western college. His four older brothers, all brilliant, were members of Phi Beta Kappa and attractive socially and successful in business or professions.

The boy was sensitive, retiring, and convinced that he was inferior in every way to other people. He had always been compared unfavorably with his brothers. He was terribly afraid of criticism and highly nervous at meeting people.

The father had sent him to New York with the request that his friend the professor "do something with him."

The boy was desperately worried about losing his job in the store, since he could not bear the idea of going back to his family. Toward the close of the interview he said that he was "so miserable he might as well jump in the river." He broke down and cried, and the interview terminated with an attempt

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on the part of the training supervisor to lessen his discouragement.

It cannot be emphasized too much or too often that treatment directed towards symptoms alone does not bring permanent results. A doctor does not treat temperature in a patient, but considers the temperature as a symptom of some more fundamental condition and directs his attention to that.

The causes of behavior being largely emotional, treatment aims to evoke an emotional rather than an intellectual response. This case was a hard one. In matter of personal habits or traits which interfere with the job, the giving of criticism becomes more complex, because the things criticized spring from the core of personality. The supervisor did not attempt to interpret the boy to himself, because she remembered a previous failure of that method. A clerk who at salary review was rated "excellent, except not aggressive enough," and who was given this criticism tactfully, proceeded to become so overbearing and autocratic that he almost lost his job for insubordination and it was years before he regained enough genuine self-confidence to do his old, excellent work.

The approach had to be more oblique. The supervisor recalled the boy and told him that probably his system errors resulted from his insufficient knowledge of how the accounting department worked. She proposed to transfer him temporarily to a minor clerical position. The boy leapt at this partial and not unflattering explanation of his failure, not perceiving that the supervisor's real motive was to remove him from the selling front without impressing on him a sense of defeat. He was not equipped for the selling task. He was introverted; he would do better at work where emphasis was not placed upon sociability and contact. After due train-

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ing, he might lay the foundations for self-confidence by developing proficiency in simple routine. He did display such proficiency and was then recalled and told that he had demonstrated a quiet concentration that had commended him to the manager of the accounting department. The manager had requested that he remain there.

This pleased the boy. He had found his place. While he was not as brilliant as his older brothers, whose bright light had thrown him into shadow, he was by no means without intelligence. He began to offer suggestions for systematic changes and, encouraged by their favorable reception, soon developed a considerable talent for system. The training supervisor recommended that he work in other departments for short periods so that he might observe their routines at first hand, and pointed out that this would be easier for him if he joined the store Men's Club and met and had a nodding acquaintance with their staffs in advance. He was brought into contact with an increasing number of people in this way and his social life approached something more nearly normal, although he was never a leader or outstanding. He earned an increase in salary and this did much to reassure him.

At the time of the first unfavorable rating, the boy's father had written to the professor a command to "put Paul on the spot and *make* him make good." Just what would have been the result had the professor followed this parental advice? Part of the boy's trouble lay in himself. Another part lay in placement. Compulsion or exhortation would have accomplished nothing but harm.

This is not to say that an outspoken rebuke is never effective. People who are mature emotionally can take criticism standing up and work on it, and often a straightforward, hon-

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est scolding or a pungent challenge will snap them out of slipshod work or habitual negligence. Even the immature, if they feel secure enough and have a sufficient drive to succeed, profit by such handling. But the treatment may be recommended only with reservations and should always be abandoned if it does not succeed the first time. A now famous editor tells how a single sentence blazed at him by one of his professors affected his college work. He had got by for two years with little studying because when he could not answer a specific question, he would write a fluent paper on some other subject and his professors, impressed with his imagination, would pass him. During one English examination he wrote a brilliant essay on democracy instead of discussing certain aspects of Burke's famous speech, which he had not read. The papers were returned; he went up to the professor expecting the usual A. He returned with the words ringing in his ears: "From anyone else this would be an A paper; I'm giving you D." The editor says ruefully that the remark taught him to work. Still, we observe in the professor's comment an implicit compliment that made the rebuke acceptable and even an incentive.

The more persuasive fact is that human beings never welcome facing unpleasant descriptions of themselves. Though the one criticised may maintain a docile and acquiescent exterior in order to hold his job, inwardly he is intent on justifying his behavior and bolstering himself up with excuses. In this state of mind he usually rejects all the unpalatable things he hears about himself, and the interview fails. This inability of the human animal to accept unpleasant ideas was illustrated in one large organization. Frequent warnings were given of unsatisfactory work, but the self-protective impulse was so



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strong that when those warned were later laid off, they demanded an explanation, saying they had no idea anything was wrong with their performance. The earlier criticism had seemingly aroused in them a completely negative and defensive emotional response which effectively blocked any true acceptance of what had been said. This protest at lay-off was so frequent that a system of official warning was tried; the employe was called to the office and at the end of the interview was required to sign a statement to the effect that a forewarning had been given. Subsequently this system was also discontinued. Study showed that all those so warned were later laid off. The method was not bringing the hoped-for results. It protected the organization against complaints of unfairness, but together with proving that simple criticism was rejected, it demonstrated the inefficacy of mere warning to improve performance. The contrary happened. While the criticism did not take effect, the implied threat did get through, stirring up so much fear and conflict that the jobs of those warned suffered to the point where lay-off became necessary. The warning aggravated the trouble. The new approach substituted was similar to that described here. The worker was encouraged, his job was studied, and additional training was given where needed. The number of inevitable dismissals was greatly reduced.

One thing completely ruled out in dealing with employes was anger. The edict was that an executive in an angry mood must wait until he could see through the causes of his anger, work off his emotions in accomplishing something else, and postpone handling difficult points until he was sure that he could manage the conversation in a way to arouse a spirit of cooperation by showing it himself.

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Where diagnostic and treatment interviews are used with people within an organization, the problem of unexpected personal confidences which arise out of the ease and reassurance engendered become a delicate ethical question. It is one thing to elicit personal history for the purpose of planning soundly for placement or handling, but another thing to use such information in determining promotion or lay-off, especially if the information be a deterrent. Where another's confidence is accepted, an obligation is implied not to betray his trust. How to balance responsibility to the individual against responsibility to the organization is a point of ethics which the interviewer must work out for himself.

One painful form of the treatment interview, is that preceding dismissal. Often where a responsible endeavor has been made to contribute to the adjustment and efficiency of employes while they are on the payroll, the effort is dropped when the time comes to dispense with their services. The relationship between industry and employe does not evaporate without residue. The handling of lay-off is important in industrial morale. The bitterness felt by an employe who deems himself unjustly dismissed quickly communicates itself to his former co-workers and an unhappy tension may spread far.

Some business houses use the time-saving device of a lay-off slip and perhaps a brief, written explanation, but there will always be an additional demand to know why, especially from an employe of long standing. He has the right to make that demand and should receive a straightforward answer. The answer can also be helpful.

There are practical reasons for regarding a lay-off interview as something more than a parting. In industries subject

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to seasonal lay-off or fluctuations in employment, former employes are constantly re-applying for jobs. Some thought should be taken to influence their future behavior should they return. Of course it may be impossible to apply this principle with large numbers of employes hired for temporary work at rush seasons. They expect lay-off and no feeling of personal hurt is inflicted, yet even these employes might face their lot with a little more courage if they received a word of commendation for work well done, and an expression of interest and good will with their dismissal.

Some advanced organizations use the lay-off slip, but the employe is interviewed by a member of the personnel department before he leaves. This interview may be merely a sketchy outline of the employe's rating, but some picture is given of how his work has been appraised in a way which will help him to improve his general performance in the future. If he has served five years or more, a complete study of his personality and record is required, for the purpose of determining whether discharge is absolutely necessary and whether some transfer cannot be effected whereby his experience may be utilized. There may be reduction of force in one department while people are being taken on in another. Every effort is made to transfer rather than to discharge, both to influence morale favorably and to save expense. Personnel turnover is costly. If the worker has passed a probation period and has cause to believe his employment steady, two weeks are not too long for the gathering of all the facts and for laying them before an impartial board for review.

This eliminates the chance that anyone's job might be at the mercy of a momentary irritation on the part of his foreman or immediate superior. Yet it would be futile to insist

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that a supervisor should retain an employe whom he has definitely decided he does not want. Once he has reached this state of mind, he will usually find justification enough to rid himself of a subordinate he dislikes, proving his point in one way or another. The only method of guarding against such prejudices is to promote among executives an understanding that makes it a matter of pride for them to develop people rather than to let them go and try out others in a restless search for perfection.

Promises of improved work or behavior obtained under duress seldom work out. Therefore it is not advisable to allow any appeal from dismissal. The mere threat of job loss has a disintegrating effect; an employe pleading for re-instatement is only asking to return to work at which he has already failed, and at which he will be even more vulnerable in the future. The additional burden of fear and doubt he will have to carry will almost certainly be too much for him. Management should take time to train and place employes properly in the beginning, and if someone's removal becomes necessary, should learn all the facts as thoroughly and impartially as possible before announcing the final decision; then the facts must speak for themselves.

No one likes the job of discharging people. Many shrink from the painful duty of facing someone with the fact of his failure; moreover, to work with someone, however impersonally, creates a relationship difficult for most employers to sever without emotion. Sometimes an emotionally upset state results from having to prod oneself to undertake the task, and the interviewer does not acquit himself well. He may spur himself on by picking flaws in the employe to evade the possible imputation of unfairness. This is unnecessary, because

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an organization which makes an honest, consistent attempt at fairness, does not need to save its face by attacking the self-respect and courage of an employe. Rather, it should be in so strong a position that it can send him off with a lift instead of dispraise. An employer will experience less discomfort in the lay-off interview as he learns to make it less destructive for the worker. It gives real satisfaction to have cultivated human interest to the point where one can discuss with an employe what he is going to do, in a manner such that he leaves with his chin up and his eyes on a future in which he can still hope to make his way.

At lay-off, a worker inevitably is faced with awareness that in some way he has failed. When dismissal is based upon routine reduction of force, he can only feel that his work does not measure up to that of someone else, or he would have been retained. Even where strict priority rights obtain, and the excellent worker knows that only a question of length of service in the organization determines his lay-off, he must confront the challenging, often fearful problem, "What next?"

The departing employe needs confidence to acknowledge to himself the loss of his job and his own limitations. He must have perspective of himself and his capabilities, cleared of all emotions which may have been aroused by dismissal. The employer who knows his staff thoroughly and has all the facts at his fingertips is of great value here. He will have analyzed the worker and his job to make his explanations beneficial and often he may be able to steer an employe into more appropriate work. A packer who has been unable to acquire dexterity and speed but is outstandingly accurate, can be told that he is wasting his time as a packer, but that

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his experience might very well fit him as an excellent merchandise checker. The man whose shyness and hesitancy hinder him at selling might well be advised that his temperament better suits him for office work. The lay-off interview can give the employe a feeling that even though he has failed, he has at least found out what he cannot do, with some suggestion as to where he may succeed.

In any criticism interview, good work should be evaluated as well as the bad. The worker should be shown his weaknesses in relation to his virtues, so that he may endeavor to build up a more even performance.

The lay-off interview, too, calls for a facing of reality, in which the executive can greatly aid. The answer to the real challenge, "It's up to you, what are you going to do about it?" will be discovered much more easily if the interviewer is alive to the emotions seething within the mind of the person who has failed: the fears, discouragement, resentment, bewilderment, which may infect him. The executive who coldly says to a salesgirl, "You're fired. Your volume is way below your quota, you're slow on your stock work, you just don't make the grade," or such words, is indeed confronting that girl with an inescapable reality, is giving her the facts of her dismissal, but is leaving entirely out of consideration the tangible human elements. But even though he preface his explanation with a list of good qualities shown, he has done little to make the experience constructive unless he takes the next step and relates the two.

An exceptionally keen executive interviewed a salesgirl who had just been laid off after eight months in the store. She had been taken on during the late fall season, had learned quickly, and had seemed so promising that she was held over after

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the Christmas rush. Her sales volume steadily declined, however, until by spring it was the lowest in the department. Her record showed that the training supervisor had tried hard to work with her, but had failed to make any headway against the girl's "lack of push." The summary before the interviewer read:

"Excellent appearance and manner. Quick, accurate. Excellent stock knowledge and taste. Sold well under Christmas pressure, then slumped. Excellent customer contacts, sometimes too nice, takes too long per customer. Should be good but lacks final punch. Conscientious, will do any dirty work. Spends too much time on stock work, lets other girls take customers. Acts as if afraid to push herself."

The interviewer, in going over this record with the sales-girl, said, "You know, when you spend a lot of time doing stock work, and are too obliging about doing odd jobs around the department, it sounds as though you were afraid of selling." At this the girl broke down and cried. She finally confessed that in slack seasons when there were only a few customers, she was simply terrified to approach them for fear she would not put across the sale. She had not dared admit this, lest she lose her job, and she could not overcome it. The interviewer said he could understand that, but it meant she had lost perspective; she was thinking in terms of her own fear, rather than concentrating on the merchandise and the customer. As the interview closed, the executive remarked, "You have everything selling takes except that, and I think when you've fought that out with yourself, you'll be all right."

Nearly a year later, this girl reapplied to the same executive. She had passed two periods of employment in other stores and felt she had made progress; she had forced herself

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to stay right at the entrance to the department and greet all customers, and she was no longer "hiding behind stock work." She asked for employment in one of the children's departments, because she had noticed that she felt less self-conscious serving children. She was given a trial and proved excellent, rating near the top of the department even in the dreaded slack seasons.

This interviewer, looking behind the bare descriptive words to the possible emotions beneath, had put a finger on the trouble, had faced the girl with it in such a way that she saw how she had been reacting, and gave her such encouragement that the girl had been stimulated to fight her own battle. Without such understanding handling of the lay-off the girl would probably have gone on from failure to failure, in her discouragement, and would never have realized herself as a valuable clerk.



## AMBITION AND THE STATIC EMPLOYEE

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**I** WANT to get somewhere!"

That is the cry that sounds loudly in the ears of every personnel officer.

"I am doing a good job. Why don't I get a promotion?"

It will swell with insistence. There is a continuous restless movement among the young. This is distinctively American. Our highways are crowded with people rushing from here to there and back. Activity and ambition—both are American characteristics. Is all this hithering and yonning an expression of the restless urge to get somewhere, an urge which works itself out in feverish activity to compensate for feelings of frustration in the industrial world?

This is likely. Industry, as many Americans find it, does not satisfy them. They are bitterly disappointed with their worldly destinies. Youthful dreams have misled them. In no other country is this so typical, because nowhere else is youth urged to attempt so much. European traditions, founded on classes and crafts and apprenticeships, limit youth's horizon.

Real ambition harnessed toward an attainable goal is responsible for a great deal of progress in a new country of wide opportunities, but in our highly industrialized society,

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much pseudo-ambition of the "Hitch your wagon to a star" type results in a good many jolts and perhaps some crashes.

The definition of "ambition" is traced to the old Roman custom of candidates going around to solicit votes. Even in those early days the motives and methods of politicians did not always inspire respect, and this idea was included in the meaning of the word. "Ambition: an eager or inordinate desire for preferment, honor, superiority, power, or attainment."

A strong desire for personal advancement may be praiseworthy. That gold could be picked up in the streets of this "land of opportunity" was a rumor that lured many immigrants from older countries where conditions were far more static and quick wealth practically unknown. Such hopes for attaining power or preferment lessen as our country passes through economic crises from the chaotic practices of pioneer days to an equilibrium in which the needs of the many are supplied. But there are still meteoric careers to over-inflate the hopes and plans of youth. Their example contributes to the wide gulf between the reality of the industrial world and what a young person expects of it before he starts to work.

Older people, nurtured in the pioneer tradition of "rugged individualism," are apt to bespeak the "any boy can be president" idea without considering that this one job is open every four years to American-born citizens of a certain age and that most of the population have to content themselves without assuming the burdens which go with living in the White House. Other executive positions, while not as scarce, are as unattainable for the large numbers. Yet those holding such positions are often the chief offenders, using ambition for the unattainable as a spur to greater effort on the part of the rank and file of workers.

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Only a few can become the higher executives. The majority are predestined to disappointment and the destructive feeling of defeat. They are "not getting anywhere," the great American sin. One question before industry is whether its leaders shall continue to foster this destructive creed of ambition, citing themselves as examples of success, encouraging its promulgation in the schools that they help to support.

The answer may in some part be found in those same schools, where there are opportunities for the correction of the American philosophy of success, which is so largely measured in terms of money and power. Ambition implies, as its object, something felt to be above one, uplifting and ennobling. The schools, with their cultural resources, may well be able to shift that emphasis from the concept of financial power as the goal to one more available to the whole population.

Meanwhile industry must face the present situation, which contains so many elements that not only make for social unrest but engender feelings of personal frustration.

"I did not go to college to stand behind a counter for the rest of my life." This is the complaint. Yet upon closer examination, it is too often uttered in a bewildered, querulous tone by a person who can give no details about what he really wants for himself. He may have a vague, somewhat envious picture of a glamorous position or condition, but no idea of what is the first step toward it. Or he may belligerently demand promotion simply because he is holding his own in his present place, but without any thought about what he could offer toward earning further responsibility. Much of this sort of wishful thinking without definition is no more than an

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escape from reality and voices disappointment, not planfulness.

Underprivileged parents are apt to demand fiercely that their own thwarted lives be fulfilled in their children, regardless of any reasonable probability of success. The kind of craving for immortality which makes the parent feel that the child is simply an extension of his life and personality, rather than a separate entity, may reproduce in the younger generation the same sense of failure or deprivation from which the parent suffered. If the child is goaded by the older generation toward a goal chosen by these adults, he is not likely to fulfill their hopes.

One of our large medical schools which has an unusual number of students from underprivileged homes of foreign-born parents, found that not only is there a higher percentage of failures among them, due to both a lack of natural aptitude and adequate background for this special training, but the students themselves actually felt relief when the matter was taken out of their hands by dismissal and they were no longer forced into a learned profession simply to gratify parental pride.

The goal self-chosen because of definite interest, especially one of scientific or creative expression, represents the real wish. Where there is no conscious or unconscious conflict between the individual and his objective, he has a motivating force. Insight into one's capabilities and needs and knowledge of how to relate them to reality is similarly essential. Some of this necessary discernment is usually found where the goal is a real one. But if it has been chosen merely to compensate for a lack felt emotionally, the individual shows little perception of himself or the object of his so-called

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ambition, which is really more of a day-dream than a definite plan.

Employees of this type are represented by those whose love needs have been thwarted and diverted, furnishing intensity for the ambitional drive. The person who has to "show" an unappreciative family may have far more zeal for his work on that account. The man who feels that he does not very much impress his wife may struggle for the means to be lavishly generous with her and his children. The girl whose marriage has failed may concentrate all of her energy on the job to combat her disillusion. A boy who rebels against parental authority seems to feel compelled to make sure of his own independence (and some girls experience this). The middle child in a large family may react in the same way, although his drive comes from his competitive relation to the other children rather than from parental pressure. A boy wants to be what his father is, because of a strong feeling of identification, or he may, from a sense of revolt, desire to be something entirely different.

Thwarted personality, arising from a sense of social disappointment, may produce the type of drive which never gives up, though faced with successive failures. Its owner may set himself toward the wrong goal every time, but he cannot admit it. A colt which, failing to follow the horses over a four foot jump, rushes pell-mell at a six foot hurdle, reminds one of the person who lacks both judgment in estimating the goal and insight into his relation to it.

All these subtle aspects of personality promote the larger industrial unrest. Society feels deeply concerned today not only about the lack of employment and subsistence for large numbers of the population, but also about an increasing dis-

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satisfaction among people who are employed. Demands for more money or better conditions are on the placards displayed by picketers. Sometimes they add, "down with" this or that. But even should the demands be equitably adjusted, will the workers be happy when they obtain these things? Our observation has been that while there may be a certain satisfaction in winning a point, such as compelling recognition of the group, it is not a lasting recompense. There is no guarantee that when the striker returns to work he will find in it a greater job satisfaction than before, while the need for it will be fully as great as it was previous to the winning of the group victory. He is still an individual. Perhaps for a time he has vicariously experienced satisfaction and prestige by belonging to a militant organization, but that cannot last unless the militance be continued and ever more pronounced, which will hurt him in other ways.

"Keeping the men satisfied" is thought of as referring to questions of pay rates, working hours, conditions of work. That is true, and job satisfaction contributed by approval and recognition cannot and should not be used to divert workers' minds or substitute for honest economic security. But when economic security has been established, industry does not find its labor troubles ended; they are rooted in job satisfaction. Where ambition is strong, it naturally follows that if a man gets nothing out of his job except the wage, he will concentrate on that and build his satisfactions around it.

Trade unions appeal doubly to this motive and to the feeling of power, and men most vociferous in such movements are often those who have been particularly deprived of normal emotional rewards. Some industries have shown their wisdom by keeping their men satisfied in more ways than by

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paying good wages; their workers are given reason to feel that they share in the prestige of their organization and hence they need not turn to militance without, to quell an inner discontent or a sense of personal inconsequence and futility.

Work without recognition or pleasure in achievement is a grim affair. During depression years, when unemployment was nation-wide, one frequently heard the charge that those out of work preferred to stay idle on relief. It is understandable that people should lose all heart and initiative when simultaneously deprived of two such basic needs of human nature as security and satisfaction. The whole foundation of their painfully learned maturity was threatened; what they had learned to achieve failed to bring reward. Those who later complained of shiftless inefficient performance on the "made-work" projects might well stop to ask how much such work supplied the human need for recognition and job satisfaction, what prestige was attached. To many workers such projects were only the personification of their failure to do for themselves.

This has carried us momentarily afield from the question the employer must ask himself: how shall he go about satisfying limited and static workers who must stay at monotonous tasks, many of whom have been misled by ambitions impressed on them by others or arising from their own personal failings? He must counter both their disquiet and their despair.

Grace Levitsky had been employed for years on a specialized clerical job, tracing complaints. She placated incensed customers, persuaded busy stockboys to look up odd items

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of merchandise, got merchandise information from buyers, and kept somewhat complicated records. Grace was excellent at it; she was extremely conscientious, patient and deferential with customers, and dogged in her pursuit of information regarding complaints. The staff members with whom she came in contact found her a great nuisance because she was always after them for something just when they were busiest, but when they exploded at her, she looked so hurt and waited so patiently that no one could stay angry very long, and Grace grew to be accepted as a necessary evil.

After four years of patient plodding work, Grace came to the training supervisor and asked for a job as section manager. She had been doing the same work for years and felt she was entitled to take a step onward. Yes, she had liked her job, but she wanted to be "on the floor." Surely she had enough experience with customers, and the mechanical part of her work had taught her most of the section manager routine. Besides, she needed a job with better pay. Her difficult family situation included an invalid mother; she and a brother shared heavy expenses, and he had recently lost his position; she was the sole family support.

The training supervisor heard this sadly, although she hid her feelings: the old, old question, "I've done a good job here, why can't I have a chance at something better?" and the answer so hard to make, "You just aren't fitted for anything better." The training supervisor knew that Grace could never be accepted as section manager if only because of her ungainly appearance. She was a gangling girl with a face so subtly unattractive that one looked at her twice to see what made her seem homely, and then decided it was simply nothing one could put a finger on. Grace lacked other quali-



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ties for any supervisory position; her personality was too self-effacing, too hesitant, to give her the necessary authority of manner; her mind was slow-working; she was persistent rather than resourceful, and patient rather than tactful. In her four years she had not succeeded in raising her status. The experienced personnel worker knows how difficult such inadequacies are to interpret to their possessor.

Yet these very qualities made Grace ideal in the job she held. As the training supervisor saw the problem, she could not recommend Grace for a section managership or other supervisory position; she would have to help Grace to accept her real situation. Accordingly she told her frankly that her appearance made her unsuitable to be a section manager, but that she was doing a wonderful job in her present position; in fact, everyone was convinced that she was doing a better job in that capacity than anyone in the store. She discussed the good qualities which Grace showed on her job in terms of how much they were needed in that work, whereas in another type of work very different qualities would be demanded. She pointed out that the guarantee of a permanent job, which everyone felt she did superlatively well, was far more worth while in the long run, even financially, than a floor job where her security would be constantly threatened.

In this interview the training supervisor rose to the situation skillfully. She began by letting Grace tell her own story in her own way, thus conceding the importance of the problem. She then proceeded to treat the problem concretely. It is a bitter thing to be told that one's appearance shuts one off from something much wanted, but the training supervisor lessened the unpleasantness by treating it matter-of-factly. She did not tell Grace that she was unattractive, but simply

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said that she was not the supervisory type; her tone even disparaged the type a little in a good-natured way; then she went on to recognition of the excellent job Grace had been doing.

But the training supervisor did not stop there. She took the opportunity to forestall Grace in applying for other types of supervisory jobs where appearance might not be a barrier. She did this by showing how Grace's good qualities applied to the kind of work she was now doing, rather than by emphasizing the qualities she lacked for managerial tasks.

There were also intangible factors in the interview which helped Grace to accept the refusal. The interviewer's appreciation of her good job made Grace rise in her own estimation and importance when she went about her work thereafter; the interviewer's attitude had made her feel that she had been treated honestly and fairly; and also, Grace could not help realizing satisfaction in this reiteration of her economic security together with the knowledge that her performance and her personality were well known and appreciated by those above her.

The supervisor followed up her interview by seeing to it that from time to time Grace's supervisors gave her a word of merited praise, and gradually the girl came to show a new and unexpected pride and contentment in her work.

An acceptance of one's limitations is difficult in a land where the idea that all men are created equal is taken literally by many who overlook differences as obvious as that some are born with blue eyes and others with brown. Granting that among people who face their limitations squarely there may not be a future so rosy that it blinds them to the drab reality

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of today's work, where are they to find substitutes for unattainable ambitions? Work was a curse laid on in the Garden of Eden and it has remained so for many ever since. One of the best antidotes for a monotonous routine is a creative interest outside. A man with such an outlet for his latent energies does not feel driven to go home and kick the cat to relieve his feelings. A hobby is a useful scapegoat or release. Creative expression is preferable to an acquisitive hobby, but even the latter can be a real source of satisfaction. Then if one cannot acquire a title and be important during the day, he may find balm outside of working hours, in addition to such job satisfaction as intelligent superiors may be able to give him.

A magazine article on postage stamp collecting has been reprinted calling this the most ridiculous of American pastimes. But were its hold on the public the psychopathic one this article implies, we could still grant it the merit of saying that "one nail drives out another." On that basis any hobby which interests some people while it harms none, has its own reason for being, even though it may have been artificially stimulated. People who cannot travel may find a thrill in watching the tropical fish which they raise. We knew a colored woman who said, when her tiny turtle started hibernating, "He ain't a bit good to me now an' he used to be so much company."

Drab lives are brightened in the oddest ways. The simple means of making them more interesting and satisfying are justified by results. Sometimes an interested person unexpectedly develops himself through his hobby. Some enter church work, some discover music. But the important thing is that

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the hobby should provide a medium whereby its owner may express himself actively or add to his sense of importance.

Though we hold no brief for collecting, it can be seen that the stamp collector finds a way to gain recognition among those of similar pursuits without having to acquire expensive possessions or crowd the family out of the house. For those who must consider inexpensive pastimes there are crafts which not only give creative interest to people who are "handy," but sometimes prove to be a means of a livelihood when regular occupations are curtailed.

During the recent widespread unemployment, people turned to a variety of interests, most of them worthwhile. To some fortunate temperaments, a vacation, even an enforced one, is a delightful opportunity for doing things which have long been planned. There was a bishop who had been an active business man before he entered the ministry. He seldom had time to enjoy his tool chest but he always had something that he wanted to do. So when an occasional cold enforced a day or two at home, the bishop worked at his hobby and eventually completed a set of furniture for the family camp. He never had time to feel sorry for himself, and with the help of his hobby he was able to enjoy poor health on the rare occasions when it gave him a day off.

During and after the war, Occupational Therapists tested the curative effects of work, not only for those who needed certain kinds to build up muscular activity, but especially for restoring an interest in life. Their findings have been useful to psychiatrists who also realize the benefit of special interests, not only for those who need help with mental hygiene, but for all. The necessity for satisfying occupations increases in proportion to the lack of worldly achievement. For this reason, education should prepare the worker by

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bringing him into contact with promising ideas and activities or at least open to him some of the many things which life offers to enrich leisure without cost. To teach a trade or a profession is not enough, nor is a so-called general education, if it leaves men and women with no way of enjoying their non-working hours except to pay for the role of passive spectators at a flicker of illusion. Men and women need more active participation; less vicarious thrills and self-indulgent, wishful thinking.

Thus some automobile plants have male glee clubs, some department stores have dramatic groups. Some industrial organizations sponsor arts and crafts shows and display the spare-time accomplishments of employees. Those supposedly "hard-headed" industrialists who consider such activities extraneous to business simply do not realize how fundamental a part they can play in relieving the cumulative effects of monotony in occupation and the sense of personal failure.

The possession of stock in the company for which he works gives an older employe an additional dividend of pleasure beyond anything the stock may pay. The feeling is one of solidarity. He has a particular concern for his company's fortunes, even though the percentage of stock owned by employes may be too small to give them any voice in management. The distribution of bonuses from profits has a similar effect.

These methods contrast with the more ruthless solution adopted by some short-sighted industrialists who dispose of static employes by simply dismissing them after they have made use of their best strength. Years of service are disregarded. These workers find themselves jobless at an age when to obtain new employment is doubly difficult. An in-

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creasing number of men and women in their late forties and early fifties are finding themselves dropped from the ranks of employables as "too old," and the cry of protest has already mounted to a demand for restrictive legislation. The industrialists who sow such seed will only reap the whirlwind.

These employers not only put the emphasis on physical effort with disregard for presumable competence and experience, but deprive themselves of a salutary proportion of static but well-adjusted workers in their ranks; consequently there will be very much more restlessness with which to contend, especially when the realization grows among the younger men that they have no future security but are working for a company that entertains no regard for their welfare. The special value of a true proportion of static but well-adjusted employes has recently been demonstrated again by the successful influx of the "late-in-life" workers—those who late in life take jobs for the first time—to many fields of industry, where they have made places for themselves. They include women of middle age, widowed or childless, anxious to help support children, to abet their husbands' dwindling incomes, or to widen their horizons, who have been especially welcome as part-time salesladies and helpers. Because they are mature, not harassed by ambition but interested, or else merely in search of security and genuinely appreciative of it, they fit in excellently. In many cases they reverse the picture of the static employe; work is their hobby and turns their minds away from home worries. They show what can be done to brighten existence by a balance of interests.

## THE BUSINESS OF BEING AN EXECUTIVE

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SOMETIMES people wondered how Mr. Prior was able to hold his position. He was head of an important department; all other departments in the organization were dependent upon its smooth functioning. The heads of all those other departments avoided contact with Mr. Prior, and his subordinates feared him. They had reason to do so. He was sarcastic, jealous, highly nervous. He could be seen watching suspiciously whenever a higher official approached anyone who worked under him, and would immediately join their conference to make sure nothing was said without his being present to hear and censor. His attitude was that of the "straw boss." He was careful that those under him did not learn the essential details of his work, so that no one could ever supplant him. The moment anything went wrong, Mr. Prior became angry and shouted, spreading blame indiscriminately. His ratings of subordinates showed all his personal prejudices and he was never known to praise anyone.

On the basis of what we have already learned about symptomatic behavior and the motives that prompt it, Mr. Prior's actions become significant. He was defensive about his social and educational shortcomings. He had risen from a humble

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start as a stock-boy without any formal schooling. His home life was not happy. He felt inadequate in all his dealings with people and particularly his superiors.

People also wondered about Mr. Stone, the militarist. He was one of those, for some reason insignificant in their own eyes, who fall back on a kind of absolute authoritative discipline. His people always tiptoed around his office, and Mr. Stone issued commands in a voice that carried finality and forbade contradiction. The popular question in Mr. Stone's office was, "Has the army started marching yet?"

Mr. Stone could also be explained. A deeper investigation of the man who has to be militaristic often reveals that the pattern of this type of behavior lies back in the relationship between the executive and his parent, that the executive had a stern father who established an unwelcome model of authoritative parental control.

Another explanation of Mr. Stone's militarism might lie in the attitude of some men who served in the World War. They were unable to readjust themselves to living in a normal peace-time life. In the army they had a feeling of power from being in a situation which gave them complete authority, and they were continually seeking to recreate a pattern which they could no longer find. They went from place to place, always encountering difficulties in more flexible relationships with people. Many of these men are still present in the industrial scene.

The militaristic is a primitive type of discipline, certainly to be used only in times of emergency, when concerted action is necessary, but never in a normal supervisor-worker relationship.

In other offices there may be kinds of executives whose



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tenure subordinates would question, some of them the opposite extreme from Mr. Stone and Mr. Prior. One is emotionally deprived and needs to have people dependent on him. He wants to have his employes come to him for everything. He enjoys the fuss and attention. There is the father-employer under whom Jean Coles worked, and to whose demands she submitted for so long. He never lets his subordinates do anything on their own, because by so doing they leave his paternal wisdom out of consideration. His assistants are never aroused to develop their full abilities. Then, everyone knows Mr. X who is planful and good at theory, but quite ineffectual at putting his plans and theories into practice. He is the executive whom an oil magnate paid fifty thousand dollars a year to look out of a window, because he had valuable visions through that pane of glass. Quite the despair of everyone is Mr. Y, who flutters timorously and avoids responsibility, and who is therefore not an executive at all in any true sense of the word. And all know the successful executives who are eager to be yessed and reject all contrary opinions. They do great harm, if they are intent upon this; for a subordinate who cannot formulate his facts and get up courage to offer them to his superior can never hope to be able to face responsibility of his own in time of stress. The executive who wants obeisance encourages in his people habits which unfit them for playing any other role but that of subordinates.

How do these men continue to remain in large modern organizations? Mr. Prior, for example?

His employers would never have entertained the thought of dismissing Mr. Prior. He had been with the firm for more than twenty-five years. He was a hard, faithful worker. It

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was too bad that he did not get along better with people, especially with those whose misfortune it was to be under him, but no one did a better job in other ways than he. His fellow department heads, even though they did not like him, were the first to admit that and to be grateful. Mr. Prior might storm, make everyone nervous, cause his men to bite their lips in silent anger, send his girls into hysterics; but once his job was done it was perfect, and his relieved employers confided to each other that they would need two men to take his place in the unhappy event that Mr. Prior should ever leave.

The same could be said for Mr. Stone. He might treat all his assistants like insignificant soldiers, but no one could find fault with the work of his regimented department, for no one there ever dared to make a mistake. Success in personnel relationships should be a requisite of an executive in any ideal industrial set-up, but men who can justify themselves in other ways, in terms of economy and special talent, will always intrude and create new problems.

These pictures of Mr. Prior and Mr. Stone will be familiar to anyone in the business world. They are actual persons, and their name is legion. One cannot hope to do much with them, for it is probably too late. They do well enough in their jobs to justify the salaries they earn, otherwise business would not employ them. If they are deficient in promoting personnel harmony, that is simply written down as regrettable. How regrettable is it?

One answer might be that Mr. Prior is too costly at any price, that he sows the seeds of unrest, and that some day he will have to be replaced when no one will be found adequately prepared to take up his duties. The other answer is

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that no merely amiable person will ever prove himself quite as valuable, and the organization wants to hold on to personally defensive, inadequate Mr. Prior while it is lucky enough to have him. Perhaps Mr. Prior can be side-tracked in subtle ways. His prejudices being well known, his ratings of subordinates are practically disregarded. A personnel manager is installed to whom those working under Mr. Prior can have recourse. Industry, having made this compromise, then goes on its way.

How does one become an executive? The question might be asked not to inquire into the means but the source from which executives are drawn. In classifying them into three main groups according to their source, certain frequently observed general merits of each category become apparent. One might begin with those like Mr. Prior who have come up through the ranks, having started from humble positions and risen to controlling offices in the same organizations for which they have worked throughout the years. They form perhaps the largest class of executives, and happily they do not all have Mr. Prior's shortcomings. Their virtues and faults are individual and may defy any classification. In this group are heads of shipping and receiving departments who started as packers, railroad presidents who started as section hands, bank directors who started as office boys, always in the same company. They are marked by definite characteristics of great value in business: their deep loyalty to the firm with which they have been identified for so long, their accumulated experience and detailed knowledge of all its workings, gained in their upward progress; their realistic evaluation of its particular problems and of the wider busi-

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ness world; and almost invariably their capacity for hard work. Some have risen by mere seniority; some, like Mr. Prior, by a combination of special talents and seniority; some are well-rounded, able men who would have succeeded anywhere, but have wisely elected to continue where in the past they made a good beginning, perhaps because the work stirred their genuine interest and has held it. The accumulated experience and loyalty these men bring to an organization are likely to be offset by particular faults, although as a class they are neither superior nor inferior to other types of executives. But having been so long in one company, they often are the enemies of change, however beneficial; their point of view may be realistic and yet narrow; their very loyalty prevents them from having sufficient objectivity in their own relations with the firm that employs them. They have had too much time to become involved in the personal animosities and petty politics that are apt to corrupt well-established businesses.

More pertinently, as a class they are the hardest on their subordinates, especially if they have risen from humble backgrounds and are "self-made," for they are sometimes defensive and insistent upon extra respect from those in the organization formerly their equals. They resent any change from their own methods in the past, and also resent the thought that their subordinates are now finding things easier. These are natural, human feelings and are not to be condemned so much as remarked, for their practical expression can often be mitigated. At their worst, these men are Mr. Priors. At their best, they have the wisdom, experienced generosity, and tolerance of the directors of Endicott Johnson. One cannot, when describing men of this type,

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draw much distinction between an executive and an employer. Many of the latter, when they have temper tantrums, outdo Mr. Prior at his loudest.

The second class of executives has only a brief history. During the War years, when the industrial world found itself short of men, many large corporations turned to the colleges and enlisted young men who were given quick training courses to equip them for responsible positions. The marked aptitude they showed, bringing their youth and trained minds to the task, opened a whole new employment field. Their application and alertness suggested to employers that perhaps they were a separate class, and that industry should not choose its leaders haphazardly, but scientifically in this manner, selecting from among the most intelligent and best educated those who could make the most of the special opportunities offered them. A descriptive phrase, "junior executive," came into being. The advantages of the plan have been amply proved. These young men and women entering business come from a broader, better background, have the benefit of concentrated training and closer attention after they come into business, and show themselves more flexible in practice. They are superior in social contacts. Of course they would have entered business anyhow; the innovation lay in their deliberate selection from academic ranks and in the training courses and guidance to which these recruits were subjected.

On their entrance, however, they created a new and more complex personnel problem: that of envy on the part of the older, less favored employes. These saw young men brought in and promoted over them. The grumbled complaint,

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"You have to be a college man," summed up the widespread feeling with simple eloquence. There was a reasonable basis for the complaint, although it might be assumed that promotion always stirs jealousy among the less able and essentially static employees. Yet the feeling was aggravated by the mistaken zeal with which some large organizations welcomed the idea that the future of industry rested entirely in the hands of the college graduate. They staffed themselves with college men indiscriminately; they soon had forces of over-ambitious, immature young men, many of them with a most unrealistic approach to business. These companies have learned, and are still learning, that a college degree is not a warrant of business ability. They have also learned that many of their criteria for choosing among college graduates have been false, that neither marks nor success in extra-curricular activities on the campus were true indications of what might be expected of the college graduate afterward. The learning process in college, briefly examined in our chapter on the new employe, was wholly different from the mental process in business; one demanded imitation, the other initiative. The athletes were much sought after, yet some of them soon found that the commercial world was not a plunging, spectacular football game, and there were no grandstands to cheer them on. The campus heroes, once in the industrial world, faced a difficult emotional readjustment; they were no longer the cynosure of all eyes; they had to start all over again from obscurity, and this time they had to succeed by different and unfamiliar means.

On every hand, the "junior executives" encountered an unexpected hostility. Older men, without their educational advantages, were jealous of their opportunities and sought

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to disparage them. "These college men think they know it all; we'll knock that out of them." The knocking-out process, of course, was far from good; and if the young college man did appear to "know it all," it was frequently because he felt so insecure when challenged by the hostility of successful older men. Thus he was pampered on the one hand, hazed on the other. This was not the best initiation to a course that should have turned him out as a well-adjusted leader in business.

Lastly, the most desired were those graduates who had manifested their self-reliance by working their way through school. But often members of this group had all the faults of the "self-made man"; they were defensive, envious of those who had enjoyed an easier time. They were also the most aggressive and demanding, the hardest to satisfy, because of the frequent divergence between their educational attainments and their social backgrounds. They were naturally not content to stay in routine posts for long; indeed, none of the college men were. They had a certain right to feel themselves entitled to favors; they had invested time and often a good deal of money in self-improvement. Their education was bound to prove an advantage in the long run. But when they were accepted too uncritically and their way made too easy, they did not benefit thereby.

Time increases the number of college men and women in business. Some predict that soon everyone will go to college. This will obviate many differences, but it will not necessarily raise the educational level in the industrial world, because the universities themselves are lowering their educational standards as they expand their enrollments. The results will be deceptive; many young men selected for

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special advancement toward executive positions will really have no better qualifications than were formerly enjoyed by the graduates of private commercial schools: a mastery of business methods, a smattering of economics and accounting, and perhaps business law. They will not bring the broader, more liberal outlook that could make men of culture in business the potential agents of much improvement in personnel relationships, through their knowledge of psychology and sociology.

This is the second category of executives.

The third class of executives may be described as the specialists, those not trained in the organization but brought in at the top at a high salary to perform unusual jobs. One might expect these admittedly successful and competent men to be effective and understanding in social contacts and matters of personnel, but invariably their arrival heralds the "clean sweep" and in anticipation of this the general morale is severely affected. The sense of insecurity spreads immediately; apprehension becomes acute. This is because so many of these executive specialists bring along with them personal assistants of proven value, until they sometimes resemble traveling circuses with their own bands of performers. If these imported supervisors frequently evince a dubious loyalty to the firms that purchase their collective services, they do fill a need for new blood essential to almost any business. Other times they have been summoned to start new departments or assume duties for which no one else in the organization has been prepared. Yet those who invite them will show great wisdom in limiting the number of personnel changes they will be permitted to make, laying emphasis upon salvage rather than dismissal.



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The executive specialist should appreciate the problem which he creates, the effect of his arrival upon morale, and the heightened credit to him reflected by his ability to work with the material at hand. He succeeds far more spectacularly when he does that. His failure to do so merely contributes to the widespread unrest from these constant changes at the top, at the expense of lesser, routine workers. A new man is brought in, tried for a short time, then dropped. Or else he goes on to another position at an even higher salary. Meanwhile the jobs of dozens of people under him have been sacrificed to his impatient desire to make a showing.

The rapidity with which some of these executive specialists move from organization to organization gives testimony to a new, frantic tendency among large corporations to steal their competitors' best men rather than to recognize and develop talent at home. They might be likened to jealous matrons who tempt away one another's prize domestics. The tendency is destructive because of the manner in which it influences the whole personnel. One cause is that those corporations which do not train their own executives, can ultimately afford to pay higher salaries that will buy a few good men at the top. They have not had the expense of educating them. This penalizes the more enlightened corporations, but as the efficiency and value of personnel training as a whole is recognized and becomes established, one supposes this inherently inefficient practice will be minimized. One consequence will be a greater stability in the entire industrial world, with more security and opportunity to subordinate workers.

The selection of executives is difficult and follows the principles of the simple hiring interview, but many times

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intensified. The elements of personality are even more significant, and the job analysis must be much more detailed. Though people with normal flexibility may succeed in any of a number of minor positions, an executive post may be far more demanding of particular qualities in which ordinarily competent applicants will fail.

Edward Adams presents a letter of introduction which states that he has just graduated, with a good record, from a certain college; the writer has known his family a long time; they are fine people and the writer has no hesitation in recommending his son to the organization where he hopes a suitable opening may be found for him.

As one would expect, young Mr. Adams' appearance and manners are all they should be. The interviewer does not take out a blank and start firing questions at Mr. Adams. Instead, he begins with some casual remark about his recent graduation, was it from his father's college? No, his father went to a large Eastern college but young Adams preferred a small one. He would have felt rather lost in the crowd at his father's Alma Mater. Gradually it appears that the reason for choosing a certain small New England college rather than any one of several better known, was that he could go home for week-ends. He had never been away to school and "After all, you have only one mother." He speaks constantly of his mother's ideas, plans and interest but never mentions his father.

Unobtrusive questioning, growing out of Mr. Adams' remarks, reveals that Edward Adams is an only child and that the companionship with his mother is very close and entirely satisfactory to both of them. He never works during summer vacations or initiates any plans of his own because he always

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goes with his mother to their cottage at the sea shore, where his father comes only for week-ends. She is the leader and he is always happy to follow her ideas. He quotes her frequently and speaks of his father only when the interviewer refers to him casually as, for instance, "What did your father think of the choice of a college? What did he want you to do after graduation?"

His father does not understand him, never has and is not the sort of person that young Adams can talk to easily. Father just says, "That is your problem; you figure it out," or, "Do whatever you like." It seems that father is entirely left out of the close tie between mother and son, although there is no suggestion of a broken home or any open inharmony. The picture, as he sketches it, shows a long vista of happy security.

Edward Adams enjoyed the pleasant routine of college and acquitted himself well enough, but had no special ambition or interest which could be furthered by the possession of a degree. He took it as a matter of course, as he had all of the other comfortable circumstances of home life. Being faced with the conventional rather than the economic necessity of looking for a job, Mr. Adams accepted the suggestion that he come with a letter of introduction. The idea appeals to him because "If I had a job in New York, probably my mother would come down and spend the winter with me," and so on.

All his comments reveal the perfectly formed pattern of an emotionally dependent child who has never had to make a decision, take responsibility, or face reality at any point without the complete and competent protection of his mother. He has never thought for himself, beyond learning his as-

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signed lessons to please his instructors in the same spirit in which he has unquestioningly accepted his mother's guidance. This nice child, without the slightest conception of any of the factors involved, comes to the city where the race is for the swift and strong, and offers himself to a thriving corporation, where the first requisite for executive success is ability to stand on one's own feet. Yet, in a great many instances, having so well answered the requirements of gentility and education, young Adams would be eagerly accepted. He would be destined for an executive position, because his social background and his family's standing demand that much.

One hesitates to say of anyone so young as Mr. Adams that he could never become executive material; yet an analysis of this one hour's conversation shows him so far to have established no patterns of independence. Moreover, Mr. Adams has shown no particular interest in this kind of work—he did not once inquire about the type of employment available—and this lack of drive, coupled with his other inadequacies, makes him a poor risk for the strenuous, demanding, and somewhat specialized executive positions this corporation might be able to offer him in the future.

When an interview has been as personal and full as this one, the interviewer has a responsibility not to let the applicant down with a flat rejection. To say, "I'm sorry, we have no opening for you," after an applicant has unburdened himself of many things that have emotional value for him, is hardly an adequate response. The applicant is likely to feel vaguely betrayed; from a practical standpoint he develops wariness in approaching subsequent interviews. Any such feeling on the part of applicants tends to reflect upon the

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interviewer as well; grapevine communication quickly warns "Look out what you tell that man," and the interviewer finds himself encountering opposition when he endeavors to carry on other junior executive interviews along these lines.

It was fairly easy for the interviewer to help Mr. Adams see, and decide for himself, that he would do better to make his start in some smaller organization, and preferably in some type of work where competition was not so large a factor. This was done by drawing a parallel with what he himself had told about his preference for a small college instead of a large one, and by describing the work of the corporation. Thus Mr. Adams was able to leave with some insight at least into what he did not want to tackle, instead of with a baffled questioning "I wonder why they didn't want to take me?"

A few minutes later, Mr. David Johnson enters without a letter. He replies to a comment upon the weather that he hardly notices the rain because he used to have a paper route when he first came to New York City to go to school. No, he was not born here, but he and his brother Sidney, so near the same age that people used to think they were twins, came over with their parents when he was so small that he remembers little of Europe. His older brothers and sisters were sent over first and worked hard in factories or anywhere that they could get a job and learn the language. Of course they did not have much opportunity to educate themselves. They went to night school but not to college. However, all of the family had planned that things were to be different for David and his little brother.

The older children advised their parents not to try life in the city at first, because they realized that the lack of English

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as the language at home would be a handicap to the little boys if they entered the large classes in crowded city schools. They wanted to avoid an unfavorable environment which might result in a feeling of inferiority for the younger children. So the boys grew up in the country, went to a small-town school where they learned English quickly and well, and where books were given for prizes. David was proud of the number he accumulated. They lived a healthy, active life and experienced no sense of deprivation or race prejudice. They were a united, devoted family and the hopes of the parents and older children were always centered on giving David and his little brother everything that this land of opportunity offers. To further their education, the family moved to New York where the boys went to high school and carried papers. They suffered no real hardships, but they worked hard during the summers and earned their way through college as a matter of course. David's family was so pleased with his early mastery of English that he was fired with ambition to learn other languages; aside from the cultural interest, he felt that in New York City this knowledge might be a real asset in some future occupation. He decided that, in some way which he did not yet know, they would be a part of his life work. The usual reading knowledge acquired in a classroom did not satisfy him; so he used to go to the top gallery of the opera-house and listen to German, Italian and French, to hear them pronounced.

While David went through a school of journalism he worked on newspapers and kept up a wide reading. Because of his unusual range of interests, with his really good education and appreciation of culture, he can meet anyone on his own ground without feeling a lack of social position. After

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deciding that publicity or advertising will be his career, David Johnson has taken every possible step to prepare himself for it and to find out the requirements of jobs and his assets. Having a well rounded personality with a mature attitude toward life and people, he meets them well, has many friends and feels at ease in a crowd, but his inner resources are many and he is not dependent on others for companionship. He has been collecting books and is happy to spend evenings with them. His parents returned to the country after the boys went to college.

Ambition, courage, energetic effort, planning, initiative, independence: all these are found in David's pattern. They are as much a part of him as his sturdy body and quick mind. He has planned and achieved, without undue conflicts between ambition and reality, and having made himself valuable, he now takes his goods to market. No employer will have to feel that a dependent child is being added to his responsibilities, if he accepts David. But imagine a situation in which Edward Adams is the buyer and David Johnson the vendor!

These are fairly simple cases. That one cannot always judge so accurately is evidenced by the following three instances, also drawn from real files, which were more perplexing to the interviewer, and were subsequently followed to learn how wisely they had been decided.

James Waite commended himself because for a young man he was exceedingly adventuresome. Most young men fancy adventure, but James Waite made it for himself. He was the only child of a successful lawyer in a small mid-western town. He had attended the State University, where he attained only fair grades, although an intelligence test gave

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him a very superior rating. He excelled in philosophy and English, and was poorest in mathematics and science. During his college days, he had owned a small newspaper on the side and conducted it successfully. He had become interested in newspaper work as early as his fifteenth year, but after graduation from the university he declared himself dissatisfied with the newspaper field because its financial return was too limited; he sold his paper and started off on a trip around the world, stopping at different places to earn money to continue his travels. He estimated that he earned at least four thousand dollars during this year. His experiences were exciting and unusual. He returned to his home city and obtained a position as a traveling salesman for a business machine house. On a boat during his travels he had met an officer of this large New York corporation who had become interested in the enterprising young man and enthusiastically recommended him as the sort the corporation should welcome. The young man himself was anxious to come to New York because he felt cramped with his family.

Certainly James Waite's hegira was impressive, but the employment interviewer was anxious to know more about him. He found that James Waite did a good job of selling himself and especially had a way of interesting people in him. He seemed far more mature than the average twenty-two-year-old, because he had always been with much older people and because he was always doing the unusual. But the interviewer knew that this appearance of maturity might be deceptive, and in James Waite's frequent changes of occupation and search for excitement he suspected an intrinsic instability. There were hints that the young man had always struggled against the domination of his father and had early



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laid the patterns of revolt against established authority. He could not stand monotony and rigidity. He had done poorly in mathematics and science, which suggested that he did not like figures and details for their own sake. He was the kind of person who would tackle anything and bluff his way through. He was demonstrably resourceful and shrewd and enjoyed the thrill of uncertainty. He would have made a good gambler.

The corporation was not desirous of taking on young men and training them unless it could hold them. The circumstances being what they were, the employment interviewer took a gamble of his own. James Waite was hired. He started brilliantly, capitalized his originality, his capacity for keen and penetrating observation, his superiority to every situation in which he found himself. But when he reached a job that required hard, demanding, detailed work he quickly became restive. After a year, when he was finally at the point where he had begun to prove himself valuable, he suddenly left to seek new experiences elsewhere, and the corporation had to go through the long course of patiently breaking in another applicant to replace him.

Quite different were the reasons for selecting Louis McCormick. He was already employed in a minor position in the corporation, and most people repeated that it was a shame his abilities were not rewarded with promotion. The chief reason for this feeling was that young McCormick was handsome and amiable; he would have looked decorative at a junior executive's desk. The personnel interviewer finally yielded to pressure and investigated McCormick's history very thoroughly. His father was a mechanical engineer and at one time had owned a small factory and was quite prosperous. Later,

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he had experienced financial difficulties. When his wife died, the boy was ten years old, and for several years thereafter the boy and his father were inseparable. Then the man remarried, and the boy had never been able to reconcile himself to the "loss of his father." He was not happy at home and finally left the parental roof. When he graduated from high school, there was little money to send him to college. He went to a distant university because he wanted to be as far away from home as possible, and also because he knew some boys who were going there. He waited on table and worked in a department store on Saturdays. His chief interest was dramatics, at which he excelled. He had completed only two years at the college, when his funds ran out. He returned home and worked for his father for a year. During this period he spent a good deal of time with a Little Theatre and began to take himself seriously as an actor. He finally abandoned his father's employ and for another year played with various stock companies. The work was unsteady and the periods of unemployment frequent. During a spell of being "at liberty," he had taken a temporary position with the corporation and was kept on, but he was secretly devoted to the idea of returning to the stage.

At first it was thought that he lacked force and interest. Six months later, he was rated as willing, cooperative and enthusiastic, but not very thorough or conscientious. Yet he had become more active and aggressive and showed a fair intelligence. In general his attitude seemed flip; he behaved like a "playboy" who had the ability to do a good job but lacked the seriousness of purpose to enable him to buckle down to work. He needed supervision. Then two boys in his department were promoted, and his disappointment at not

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making the grade too seemed to act as a stimulus. From that time on he had settled down and shown real development. In some ways, his performance was outstanding. He became a minor supervisor. He kept his people on their toes, knew them well, won their respect and liking and got good work from them. He himself was always on the go, working late every night.

The personnel interviewer had a hunch that this was just another way in which the young man was "showing off." He was an actor who had cast himself into a new role, and whose appearance and manner won him much sympathy. But he still gave hints of an inner instability. His attachment to his father and the subsequent insecurity he had felt in that relationship had something to do with his occasionally infantile attitude and behavior, for he was now throwing himself into his work with an excess of zeal. Yet on the basis of the approval he had won, it seemed better for the general morale of the organization to give him the promotion he so apparently deserved. For a short time the young man was indeed ornamental and efficient at his desk. But he was not really at home there. He missed his audience. The play became dull, and his work sloughed off. His employers then realized that he was occupying a position which might far better have been given to someone else, but it was too late.

Quite the contrary of decorative was the third young man. He possessed nervous mannerisms that were distracting, and the employment interviewer had a hard time summoning patience to see the meeting through. Yet in conversation, the nervous applicant revealed an unusual intelligence and a surprising school record in which he had been outstanding in particular fields from which his mannerisms might reasonably

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have barred him. The interviewer became interested in this anomaly; the most reassuring thing about the young man was that he did not place stress on his past victories, which indicated that they had not been compensations for a secret feeling of inferiority, but were merely taken for granted. This suggested that the applicant had simply dismissed his handicap. He was that rarest of all things, a mature person. His mind was brilliant, his point of view sound and practical and his sense of reality good. Often a person with his mental scope and capacity for theorizing was an introverted, rather confused individual whose theories and ideas represented a flight from reality, but not this young man. He met the world and in his deliberate choice of a career, for which he had carefully prepared himself, had already found his place. It would be useless and needless, the personnel interviewer realized, to assign this young man to any work where his nervousness would be in his way. He did not have to master his handicap, since psychologically it did not trouble him. Instead, his analytical capabilities should be utilized in some research position, where he would be confronted with no obstacles. His objectivity and shrewdness would soon advance him. The personnel director had a hard time convincing the department head that he should take on a newcomer so unprepossessing, for most business men are apt to base their first judgments on physical impressions; but not much time passed before the same department head was grateful for his new assistant.

The young man showed one further quality. He was able to get on with himself satisfactorily, and with the same formula he was quite as able to get on with other people. His personnel relationships were good, and this ultimately

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became apparent in a leadership which his mere physical appearance would never have warranted him. People forgot about his mannerisms when they spoke and worked with him. The personnel interviewer chastened himself, whenever he looked in the direction of that successful young man, remembering his initial impatience with him. He had done well not to dismiss him at once as an employment possibility.

The foregoing showed a little of the process of selecting junior executives. But all senior executives have at one time or another served in a junior capacity, whether or not they were selected for such posts from the start. Business chooses its leaders after they have been tested by long, painstaking experience. Some reach the top sooner than others, but that is often dependent upon fortunate circumstance. Our question might rather be: How shall the executive be recognized when the moment of appointment comes? Generally a mature age is one of the requisites; but alas, age is not always synonymous with the true emotional maturity so much needed in the industrial world. Should one attempt to portray the ideal business executive, the shortcomings of many industrial leaders will be obvious. One can reply that the ideal is therefore not valid. Those who succeed in business are its executives, and consequently the qualities that make for success should be portrayed. But those same industrial leaders would hesitate to call the business world perfect, and some of the unrest that characterizes it they themselves might lay to their personal faults. On the other hand, perfect men will not be found in any other field, the professions or politics, where there are turbulent confusions similarly explicable.

The ideal executive might be depicted by noting, among

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others, the following qualities when choosing or rating him. (These desirable qualities have been determined after a study of several thousand executives.) The first is that the executive should be a mature person. Maturity is not easily defined, but it denotes recognition of the real world and a successful adjustment to it. One might portray this better by telling what the mature person does not do. He does not take flight from the world in day-dreams or whining or wishful thinking. He does not revert to infantile levels of behavior to attract attention or to get his own way. He does not fly into tempers or play when he should be working, or work forever without relaxation. He is considerate of other people, because he understands them by understanding himself. His vanity is restrained; he is not unduly anxious to wield power over others. He is not guided by any easy, cheap philosophy that promises him a short-cut to affluence and position.

One can see from even this brief summary that mature people are scarcer than they should be, and yet they affect the lives of those working under them in such vital ways, having both individual and social significance, that their authority is certainly misplaced if not in adult hands. To the extent that industry has a social conscience, it must acknowledge this in appointing its leaders, even when profits are the primary motive. The mental attitude of the "bosses" will condition the mental attitude of the workers, whose attitude in turn determines the whole national temper.

But industry is equally justified in asking of its executives that they be money-makers. The inflexibility of the industrial world as a reality to which men and women must adjust, should never be lost sight of. One asks of the prospective executive, therefore, whether he is well-suited for the carefully

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analyzed job, whether he will bring to it a personal resourcefulness, imagination, creative initiative, shrewdness, and constant alertness. He must be observant. He must himself show analytical ability and prove attentive to details. He must be able to organize his work and direct others, for the very meaning of the word "executive" demands one who puts into force an ultimate idea by seeing that others carry it out. It follows that he must be able to stand up under pressure, must intelligently and patiently delegate some of his duties to others, which implies his need to size up the inherent capabilities and resistance to pressure of those under him. He must modify his own behavior and his discipline over subordinates with common sense and a saving sense of humor. This means more than being funny or seeing or saying amusing things; it calls for that knack of releasing tension in the face of what might otherwise be an impasse. A person who lacks this sense of proportion lets himself get tense and uncompromising, often takes himself and his job too seriously, sometimes makes himself ridiculous, and allows rigid issues to arise which he cannot resolve.

The good executive has objectivity and confidence in himself, a complete knowledge of his job and the jobs of his subordinates. He can reach decisions quickly, when the occasion arises, and follows through open-mindedly. Equally unsatisfactory in executive positions are the men who cannot reach conclusions, a first symptom of the neurotic, and those who adamantly insist upon carrying out a bad decision just because they have made it, and become emotional in the process. He must be a good teacher, who makes his wants clear to those of lesser comprehension; and friendly but adept at

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keeping his distance, without being autocratic. He does this by having poise, a respect for his subordinates and a willingness to commend them. Yet he never resorts to flattery or becomes too familiar. He is diplomatic but sincere. He has good health and a consciously directed energy. He does not interfere with his subordinates, once he has delegated responsibility to them. He guides and develops the larger implications of the job. He can criticise constructively, and can take criticism and pressure himself without passing it on. He certainly does not surround himself with weak people so that he can feel superior, nor regard each new person as a potential threat to his position. He maintains decorum and sets an example by being well groomed and well dressed in accordance with his means. He allows no personality difficulties of his own, jealousies or resentments harbored from earlier life, to warp his point of view or prejudice him against particular classes of people, those better educated than himself, or more fortunate by birth, or different in race or religion. He is patient and honest with his workers. He stimulates and inspires them. They like him, and he has a good office in consequence.

This executive is not a paragon of all virtues, although it must be admitted that he possesses a good many. Yet the ideal is one that can surely be realized, and actually such executives exist, along with the Mr. Priors.

One last category of executives, which is too small to be general, includes those erratic types who are permissible exceptions to the rules, men of genius such as Steinmetz. Many large organizations boast such men, who produce brilliantly,



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but who are not at all well adjusted, in the sense that their very abnormality gives them force. They will be found in advertising agencies, factories and department stores, as well as in scientific research. Goethe has said, "It is the property of true genius to disturb all settled ideas." Steinmetz did notable work in the electrical industry, but its routine, rules and red tape simply had to detour around him. He would not be harnessed and driven. He would not conform or make an effort to please little people. That was all right for Steinmetz, but an allowance for erratic behavior can be commensurate only with results. The temperamental executives who behave like Steinmetz but do not produce like him should not long be tolerated. Their abnormality is not salutary nor necessary.

The employer who is chiefly interested in his balance sheet, or who believes with some justice that he acquits himself of responsibility to his employes by a full pay envelope, will be inclined to overlook personnel talents in choosing his executives. He will not dwell too long on what native tact and comprehension they show in handling people. But the conviction has gradually spread even among such employers that there are material advantages in personnel harmony. They may compensate for their executives' shortcomings in the manner we have suggested before, by installing a personnel officer or a personnel department, depending on the size of the organization. They may even go further and insist that all their executives be subject to a course in personnel training, such as shall be outlined in the chapter to follow. One point should be emphasized. Regardless of whether or not the executives have a personnel point of view, the employers themselves must have one. They are the owners. The personnel

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department will ultimately reflect the attitude at the top. There is no substitute for enlightened ownership or an understanding policy on the part of the actual heads of the company. The directors and owners and managers remain the keystone of harmony in the industrial world.

## PERSONNEL TRAINING FOR EXECUTIVES

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ONE of the most familiar of legal phrases is "the statute of limitations." In personnel work, an even more helpful phrase would be the "statute of human limitations." Some people, it seems, can never be brought to understand how they should govern their relations with others. Our concern should not be with them, because they should not be in supervisory positions. Yet they are often found there.

What limits such people is their lack of objectivity. When someone is pointed out as having a gift for handling his workers well, he will invariably be recognized as a man with a well-adjusted and mature personality. He knows himself, and this helps him to know others. He shows both understanding and impartiality, and this is evidence of his objectivity.

Many men and women think they know themselves and do not. They are so sure of their self-knowledge that consciously or unconsciously they reject all criticism. They may also think they understand others, when actually they have no glimpse of the truth at all. They are merely projecting their own mistaken and distorted ideas onto other people. They are wholly subjective, not objective, though they may flatter themselves that this is not so.

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One general, false notion is that everyone understands human behavior because everyone is human himself. But human behavior is often not what it seems. It conceals a purpose, and sometimes the true nature of that purpose is hidden even from its possessor. Thus we say that behavior is symptomatic, and to change behavior we must find what motivates it. We must ask ourselves not how a person is behaving, but why he needs to behave in a certain manner; for behavior is defined as the characteristic way in which a man attempts to settle the conflict between his needs and desires and his natural ability to satisfy them. Unsocial behavior is the fever, not the illness; it warns us to look deeper for the cause.

That search is useless without a degree of objectivity about ourselves and others. We have already spoken of the objectivity that must be attained by the hiring interviewer and the employer engaged in criticism. He must be objective or he fails at his task. As an evidence of how little objectivity prevails, any hiring interviewer could quote the many times he has been approached by people who say, "I have a friend I should like to send down to you. Perhaps you could use her." The employment interviewer might answer, "You know the requirements of our organization, and you know more about the person than I can possibly learn. Before you send her down here, decide the matter for yourself." To this, the reply will usually be, "Well, I know her too well. I am not able to judge her." This is a confession of how subjective and colored by emotion are most estimates of others.

The employer who wishes to test his objectivity may do so in a simple manner. Let him try to arrive at a full evaluation of one of his employes by asking himself a few questions.

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He will soon find that he is forced to evaluate himself as well. The questions: "Am I tending to over-value this employe because of a sort of sentimental friendliness and a desire to protect people dependent on me? Am I too generous in my estimate because I really know less about him than I should and am afraid of being unfair if I am more critical? Am I projecting my own success by saying to myself that I am doing an excellent job; this is one of my people, therefore he must be good? Or do I rate him too harshly because I have a desire for perfection that goes beyond attainable limits? Do I complain that he is stubborn when really I am the stubborn one? Do I attribute to him other faults that are really my own? Am I jealous of him because my career was hard, while he is finding the way more easy? Do I feel socially inferior to him, despite my superiority in business? Am I too responsive to physical appearance? Do I tend to over-rate attractive people and under-rate unattractive ones? Does this employe flatter me, and am I susceptible to his flattery? Am I 'seeing' his performance, or merely the person? Have we worked together so long that I uncritically rate his behavior in the light of a past judgment which I have never troubled to revise? If he is a newcomer, am I measuring him by a single incident whose importance I exaggerate? Do I tend to put more emphasis on certain aspects of his performance rather than on all, due to personal predilections of my own? Do I feel sorry, emotional, vindictive, indignant, when I think of him? Am I as clear-headed about his work as about that of the next person? Does he amuse me, so that I am too lenient? And if he does not do his job well, does the fault lie with him or with me, or with the system?"

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But rare is the employer who will ask himself all these questions and answer them truthfully.

The case of Miss Kelly will point out the problems here.

Miss Kelly was one of the store's best supervisors. She had an unerring sales sense. Her faults were that she often scolded her people without stopping to think whether her criticism would do harm or good, sometimes terrified nervous clerks, and never allowed an employe a chance to explain. On one occasion, a girl had proudly spent an hour re-arranging a display. Miss Kelly came along before the girl was finished and objected violently without permitting the ambitious clerk to interpose a word. Yet later the display was accepted as a real improvement.

Her employers thought that a few words to Miss Kelly would suffice. She was summoned to a conference and the complaints against her were discussed. She was advised never to criticize a clerk in the presence of a third person and to temper her criticism with some praise, if possible, even if that meant pausing first to find something in the clerk's performance that merited approval. She was urged to mete out appreciation for good work, but not to believe that employes did things wrong or made mistakes because they were bad or malicious. They were really anxious to do their jobs well, and she should be glad to show them how.

"That should be very simple for you, Miss Kelly, since you are so able and know the work so well yourself," smiled her employers, putting into practice the doctrine they preached. "So why not make it a rule always to stop and think when you feel like blowing off at someone? And watch your tone of voice when speaking to clerks?"

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They had not counted on Miss Kelly's having any trouble in accepting these maxims. She listened attentively, her manner a little defensive. At first she broke in to say that others had spoken to her in the same arbitrary way, her superiors in particular, but then she sat silent. Her employers hopefully sent her back to her department, but the desired result did not materialize. Miss Kelly behaved with frigid politeness for a few days, but after a week had passed she was just the same as she had been before. The reason for this was simple. Miss Kelly approved of the suggestions, but she did not really think of herself as having committed all the faults listed against her. She could not change her behavior, because she could not believe that she acted as others said she did. She lacked objectivity about herself. She merely thought the criticism was unfair and, her emotions stirred, rejected it.

The employers' approach was not adequate. Two things were needed here. The first was to probe more deeply. There should be no attempt to change Miss Kelly's behavior without first learning what caused it. The second was to help Miss Kelly attain sufficient objectivity so that she could successfully supervise others. The first of these two new approaches was easy, the second more difficult. But when the deeper motives of Miss Kelly's behavior were discovered, the task of helping her toward some objectivity about herself followed logically.

Why was Miss Kelly such a harsh supervisor, an example of the "straw-boss" at her worst? She was an old employee. Her social background was poor. All around her there were many changes; younger buyers and supervisors replaced old ones, and these newcomers were better educated than Miss

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Kelly. She felt increasingly insecure. She received no recognition that her work was still commendatory and this heightened her insecurity. The moment she entered her work-world every morning, she was an unhappy person and acted as some unhappy women will act. A little praise for Miss Kelly accomplished wonders. But there still remained a long process by which she was slowly taught how she too could improve the performance of those working under her by also praising them. In our chapter on the criticism interview, we have already indicated the subtle, devious ways by which Miss Kelly would be encouraged to become an active and helpful leader in her department. Those methods worked. Miss Kelly had the natural enthusiasm that belongs to the gifted sales supervisor. She was led to attack her personnel problem as a game. And every time she scored, she gained new confidence.

The first step was to reassure Miss Kelly. Her good qualities were recognized. Then she was shown that she should round them out by joining her superiors in an effort to raise sales performance throughout the organization, starting with her department. A small, specific suggestion was put forward and Miss Kelly was asked to try it and report on her success or failure. This was to be a trial of constructive criticism of others. In a week, Miss Kelly triumphantly reported: "I have a sales clerk who is responsible for checking the incoming floor-pieces. One day last week we were very busy and she failed to check certain items which were needed on the floor. We lost several sales. Instead of scolding the girl, as I might have done, I called her into my office and talked to her about her job and the importance of an accurate check on moving stock. I was careful to establish her confidence by remarking what a good sales clerk she actually is, and made



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her feel that the object of our conversation was to enable her to do a well-rounded job. After hearing her side, I began to feel that on busy days she really had too much to do. I promised her that whenever she foresaw a rush, if she would let me know by noon of that day, I would send someone to help her. She was very happy about this, but so far, although we have been busy, she has needed no help. I believe the girl feels much better about her job as a whole."

Her employers seized this opportunity to commend Miss Kelly and at the same time, enlisting her enthusiasm over her accomplishment, pointed out some further way in which she could help others. Thus the game went on. What pleased Miss Kelly most was that now she was identified with her employers, a form of recognition she most desired. She even remarked that she was grateful that this experiment had been undertaken, because it gave her a chance to meet her superiors on a more equal footing.

How did this lead to Miss Kelly's attainment of objectivity? She had been defensive, but now her need for defensiveness was lessened, and with it the absolute necessity for self-deception that all defensive people have. When she found that her own position was secure and that she could influence other people in a helpful way, she began to watch them more closely and lose sight of herself in her interest in them. What was more important, she remarked to her employers that the things she had learned about handling people were just as useful socially. No one makes a conscious effort to improve himself without tacitly admitting to some faults. Once Miss Kelly was led, by recognition as a person and by encouragement to make that first concession, she began to view herself critically. Now she had every inducement to con-

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tinue with that self-criticism in her anxiety to keep her employers' approval. She improved because they took pleasure in her improvement, whereas condemnation would only have driven her further into her stubborn, defensive shell.

Such objectivity as Miss Kelly did attain came mostly from the suggestions of her employers. She could not evolve her own methods or reach her own conclusions about others, but she could borrow their technique and opinions. The victory lay in her finally being willing and able to do this, and the means was the skilfully conducted treatment interview.

A harsh manner toward subordinates is not the only fault of minor supervisors. Other faults frequently charged against them are the familiar ones of favoritism and personal animosity, or ill-concealed jealousy directed toward their assistants, whom they believe to be threatening their positions. In almost every instance there is insecurity and a lack of objectivity involved, or perhaps a deeper personality conflict that influences behavior. The problem might be called that of "the straw boss" and here, as nowhere else, the employer is struggling with the "statute of human limitations." The petty demands for recognition must be satisfied, security manifest, and sufficient objectivity inculcated to allow for the acceptance and successful application of a personnel technique.

The question now often asked is a new one. Can the "straw boss" be eliminated, briefly and effectively, by requiring all those in supervisory positions to take evening courses in personnel training such as are now becoming popular in many large, progressive organizations?

The answer is yes and no. Those who need help most will probably benefit least by such a course. Mr. Prior, we can

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imagine, would refuse to believe that men who had begun humbly and had risen with so little schooling to a position of responsibility, behaved as he did chiefly as a measure of defense. "Modern stuff and nonsense!" he would say, more defensive than ever. But the same statement would allow a good many of Mr. Prior's associates to understand him better, and by recognizing the truth as it applied to him, come a bit closer to recognizing some other truth as it applied to him.

Thus it can be said that such courses have proved invaluable to those capable of taking full advantage of them. They help the minor supervisor after a concise, simple description of psychological principles, to understand how his subordinates are like him in their search for approval and recognition or job satisfaction. He will have expounded how behavior is symptomatic, and how many patterns are traceable to childhood experiences and home influence, so that he will learn to check his anger and look behind job performance for deeper explanations. To grasp these points from a lecture, if the lecture is delivered competently and illustrated with practical examples, requires only normal intelligence and a minimum of education.

The course should proceed from general psychological principles to particular studies. The various aspects and methods of the interview as a means of analyzing and modifying behavior should be shown. Department problems should be discussed. The prejudices betrayed in ratings should be pointed out, and much emphasis should be placed upon the executive's teaching responsibilities, with some concrete exposition of the learning process. Finally, sample problems should be given to the listeners and they themselves should be asked to interpret the behavior shown in them and indi-

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cate how they would solve them. The executives should be encouraged to report special difficulties encountered in their departments and ask for the group's opinion on how to handle them, providing this will not involve the violation of anyone's confidence. The interest expressed in such courses, wherever they are given, and the readiness and eagerness with which their principles are accepted is one of the most heartening signs in the industrial world today. The time will doubtless come when they will similarly form a part of the curriculum of every school of finance and business in the country.

One such class, for example, was given the picture of a masculine Miss Kelly, a young man appointed to a headship of a department, a position that he was not quite ready to fill. When he first entered upon his duties, the sales clerks were favorably impressed by his appearance, but very soon began to wonder whether they were going to like him or not. In his first encounters he gave the impression of being a little superior and not particularly interested in getting acquainted with them. Over a period of months he became steadily less well liked by his people. Their reasons were these:

Unless he had a question to ask, an order to give, or a criticism to make, he seldom paid any attention to the sales clerks. He never said "good morning" when he came into the department, unless greeted first. During the day he would walk past them as if they were part of the fixtures.

On the other hand, he was talkative and animated with other executives, especially his superiors. The sales clerks gathered the impression that he wasted a good part of each day chatting with various executives.

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He gave instructions rather arrogantly, always using an order, never the request method.

When under pressure, he yelled at his people and criticized them in the presence of customers.

After several months had elapsed, he felt less sure of himself, and as difficulties piled up, he began to criticize his subordinates so much and so indiscriminately that they paid little attention to what he said, but were resentful of his complaining attitude.

He used his assistants and heads of stock almost as though they were valets. Sometimes he made scathing remarks about various clerks to others, which made everyone feel that he talked about them in the same way behind their backs.

He treated vendors in much the same way as sales clerks, unless they were important ones.

These were symptoms of his increasing insecurity, and the class had been trained to recognize the picture. They anticipated what had actually happened to this young man. He was less and less trusted by his superiors, who observed his uncertain behavior. He became afraid to buy and afraid not to, and vacillated and worried. He began to have headaches for which there was no discoverable physical reason. After about ten months on the job, he became definitely panicky. His manner with the other executives changed. He told them endless stories of his troubles and the stupidity of the people with whom he had to work. His voice and manner were tense and nervous.

He was laid off at the end of fifteen months in the department, an almost perfect example of improper placement. Among the last things he told his councillor was that the new buyer should be warned of the urgent need for housecleaning

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in the department. There were hardly any good sales clerks in it, and the employment office never seemed to be able to find good ones.

The class was now asked what his successor should do in taking over this disrupted department. Their response revealed something more of the insight their training had given them into effective handling of such situations. This was the course of procedure they laid down for him:

He should call an informal and friendly meeting and say that he had always enjoyed his contacts with sales clerks in his old department and expected to continue to do so here.

He should take time to get acquainted with his people individually, by helping to sell in busy sections, and study clerk locations and stock work. He should also ask clerks for advice in selecting merchandise and arranging displays.

He should be careful not to listen to any criticisms of the former buyer.

He should hold good merchandise meetings, praise people for outstanding work and for sales in which the amount was large or the customer difficult. His criticism should be helpful.

He should set an example of hard and enthusiastic work and never let clerks see that he was worried or depressed about the department, even though he might have occasion to feel that way.

He should make no promises he could not keep, never "pass the buck" on errors, or seek to avoid unpleasant responsibility. He should be patient with new people.

He should make sure that everyone in the department understood the standard of work expected of him and that he,

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as buyer, was ready to give every possible aid in helping to meet that standard.

This constructive program would certainly dissipate the harm wrought by the first buyer. Nor was the ideal beyond the possibility of realization. That the ideal had been so readily formulated by the class was significant in itself.

Here are two other problems offered in lectures on personnel training for supervisors and executives, with some of the questions they raised.\* The reader may find it of interest to attempt his own answers.

### GRUMMAN

Grumman was a young man who had been hired by the shop foreman of a medium-sized garage in one of the New England cities. As his previous experience had been acquired solely through his tinkering with a second-hand car which he owned, and with neighbors' cars, his pay was fixed slightly above the apprentice rates. Both Grumman and the foreman believed that this was fair because the garage was part of the agency for a luxury-priced car in which many special tools were used in repair work. Because of the size of the garage it was desirable that the mechanics become expert in the use of all repair equipment. It was expected, therefore, that during the first few months of his training Grumman would be essentially an apprentice.

As Grumman had considerable talent as a mechanic, he quickly learned how to make use of the new types of tools which he found in the garage. He enjoyed his work and liked not only the foreman but also the other workmen with

\* These problems are used through the courtesy of Prof. T. H. Brown of the Harvard Business School.

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whom he was associated. At the end of nearly a year of service, he felt that his pay should be increased because he was competent to perform repair jobs as quickly and as skillfully as the other workmen. He made several requests to the foreman for a raise, but was put off either with an excuse of pressure of work or with the statement that the foreman believed that the management would decline any request for an advance.

Finally Grumman decided to go to the manager himself. The manager promised to investigate but gave him no encouragement.

The manager took the matter up with the shop foreman who immediately gave an enthusiastic report of Grumman, stating that he was one of the best men in the shop and that he was actually worth as much as any other because of his mechanical skill.

1. What should the foreman have done?
2. Was Grumman justified in going over the head of the foreman to take his problem to the manager?
3. Under what circumstances is the foreman not justified in pressing the claim of an assistant?
4. What methods would you suggest to promote efficient cooperation between workman, foreman, and manager?
5. Assuming that the manager was willing to give Grumman a raise and that the foreman's opinion of his skill was justified, how would you rectify the situation? Would your answer depend upon Grumman's character? Remember that if a large raise were given immediately it might tend to break down an otherwise satisfactory morale in the shop. On the other hand, a small raise might bring about a situation in



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which the foreman would seem to acknowledge grudgingly that Grumman had forced his point.

How could the foreman preserve his self-respect before his men and still deal justly with Grumman?

### HENRY SANDERSON

Henry Sanderson was without funds when he entered college. He was under the necessity, consequently, of earning something during his summer vacation. One summer he secured a position as machinist in a manufacturing company. The foreman of the particular department to which he was assigned set him to work at a lathe, giving him the beginner's normal time rate. After several weeks' work at the beginner's standard hour rate, the operator would be transferred to the standard piece rate for the department. It was expected that during the period of apprenticeship the new worker would receive additional supervision from the foreman who was held responsible for the quantity of work turned out by new men.

After a week of work Henry Sanderson requested the foreman to put him on full piece rate. The foreman was somewhat surprised, as most beginners required several weeks at least, and as it was the rule that when a man was changed to piece rate he either completed his work satisfactorily or was discharged. Since Sanderson insisted, however, he agreed to the change. At the end of another week Sanderson had completed a maximum of work allowed by the shop rules. He repeated this performance in each of the succeeding weeks.

Actually this performance aroused some jealousy on the part of other workmen. At their suggestion the assistant

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foreman examined all Sanderson's work, using gauges and calipers in the process of an unusually thorough inspection. With the exception of very few pieces, all of the work passed these tests.

Sanderson's system consisted of spending an unusually large amount of time not only in the set-up work which he was required to perform but also in the very orderly location of the trays of pieces to be manufactured and of finished pieces. Furthermore, he was extremely careful about the cleanliness of his machine and work, since he knew that unnecessary waste or chips tended to cause delays. Such delays, while individually small, amounted to a considerable total by the end of the week.

1. What should be the attitude of the foreman toward such a man? Should he be held up as an example?
2. How can this situation be handled so that the quality of the other men's work will equal his, without arousing their antagonism toward him?

The chief benefit of such a training course is not the analytic power that may be developed or the personnel technique that may be acquired, but the individual members' growth of objectivity about themselves. That comes from their meeting in conference with others and hearing discussed the problems that all supervisors must solve. They compare experiences and see wherein their methods agree and differ. A wholly new atmosphere of intelligence and interest in personnel problems is also created.

At such conferences, the many plaintive enquiries that reach a supervisor's ears are anticipated and discussed. The

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difficulty of answering them truthfully and yet sympathetically is stated. There is insistence that no formula should be evolved for evading the responsibility raised by these questions; each case should be considered individually and the reply should be in accord with the employee's merits. The familiar questions:

"I've done an outstanding job here. Why doesn't that mean that I'm good enough for a bigger job?"

"I know I could do it if you would just give me a chance."

"What do you think I'm suited for?"

"What has X got that I haven't got? I think I'm as good as he is."

"If I'd gone to Smith instead of Hunter I bet you'd be a lot more interested in me."

"I can't show what I'm capable of on the job I have now."

"My department won't recommend me for promotion because I'm doing a good job there and they don't want to take a chance on replacing me."

"What else can I do to prove I'm good?"

"The department head has it in for me."

"I think I'm just as good as (or better than) the assistant in my department."

"I'm sick of selling! I don't want to sell all my life."

"Whom do I have to know to get ahead?"

"I know more than these green junior executive people."

"How can you really *know* whether I'd be good or not?"

Frankness, providing it is tactful and constructive, will always prove best. But to be constructive, a frank reply would have to follow a study of both the employee and his job. The ways of making such studies, through job analysis and per-

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sonality evaluations, is usually the central material of the course.

One beneficial result of even a superficial personnel training course for executives is that it opens their eyes to the possibility of there being more in a situation than is immediately apparent. Once this principle is accepted, they should be alert and prone to seek expert advice when the problem eludes their comprehension. A little learning is a dangerous thing. The limits of psychiatric work in business must be carefully defined.

A warning might be found in the story of a woman supervisor not unlike Miss Kelly who became so imbued with the spirit of personnel guidance that she energetically set out to remake everyone; it was her new object in life. Soon complaints began to come from her department. Her workers were divided into two groups, those who felt they were "in favor" and those who were "out of favor." Among the latter was a salesgirl who reported: "Miss Warren used to seem to like me pretty well, but now she picks on me all the time. I even ask the other girl in my section to hand in my sales slips at the end of the day, I get so nervous about seeing her."

An analysis of the two groups revealed that Miss Warren's favorites were those whose faults permitted her to help them along the constructive lines she had recently learned, while those she disliked were the more self-sufficient who were not susceptible to suggestion. They would not play the game. Her favorites brought her tales to which she eagerly listened, and the others felt that they were being spied on. This was an unwholesome situation, and to make it worse,

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Miss Warren had gone so far to win over the favored sales-clerks that she had taken them out to lunch and seen some of them out of the store. Her employers found it necessary to repress Miss Warren's zeal and to drop a hint about the wisdom of keeping a dignified distance between herself and her workers. The real respect that has to exist between superior and subordinate was threatened by too great intimacy and familiarity.

This personnel zeal can be carried to fantastic lengths. When three girls from one department were treated for hysteria within a few weeks, it was called to the attention of the personnel bureau. The situation in the department was found to be an almost incredible one. The supervisor of these young, adolescent girls was a woman who had known little romance in her own life. She decided that she was a good personnel worker and needed to learn the intimate details of the lives of the people she supervised, particularly the romantic details. In this way, of course, she was making up to herself for all the glamorous things she had missed. The girls soon saw that to gain her attention and get credit and approval, they had only to relate their adventures. They were almost too young to have satisfying romances, and so they began to invent them. The stories became more and more involved, until their authors were quite out of their depth. They had started out mildly, but when they observed that by winning the supervisor's sympathy they earned higher salary ratings, they went on to tragedy. One of the girls finally got herself into serious difficulties because she had gone into mourning for an imaginary lover who had been killed. The burden of inventing these fictions and living up to them had become too much. Hysteria and emotional upsets followed.

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Such excesses are to be avoided. Yet much that is amazing and important can be uncovered and rectified with the aid of a little knowledge. The point is that supervisors should know when they are beyond their depth and then seek expert advice.

One young woman executive found her male assistant inexplicably contrary. He would always argue, never carried out orders as she gave them, and betrayed his antagonism in many unexpected ways. She could find nothing in the department that would account for this antipathetic behavior, and realizing that it was beyond her ability to fathom, sent the young man to the Conference Office for investigation. At first the personnel interviewer was as puzzled as the young woman executive had been, and indeed the young man himself, intelligent and agreeable in other respects, admitted that he could not explain himself. Somehow he had a nervous desire to behave perversely when ordered around by women. Cautious questioning brought to light that this young man had a favored, spoiled sister at home, a sickly child, with whom all his life he had been forced to compete unsuccessfully for his parents' affection. The little sister was petted; he was neglected. Naturally he had taunted the little girl and crossed her out of jealousy. This habit was ingrained; he simply could not enter into any sort of competition with women. As this was revealed, the young man understood himself for the first time. He thought of many other responses of his that confirmed the assumption. His fault could probably be cured with proper guidance, but that lay outside of the store's province, just as this questioning had been beyond the young woman executive's jurisdiction. He was

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transferred to another department where he worked only with men and soon showed himself very able.

The function of personnel training is to promote harmony and improve performance; not to effect any but the most simple cures. That is not within the business field.

One last thing to be impressed upon the executives is that job behavior is not only influenced by these many unseen factors, but often the physical complaints of employes have their origin in psychological maladjustments.

During the depression years, which were years of anxiety, there was a marked increase in those physical disorders whose symptoms were so-called nervousness. This was especially true of women who suddenly found themselves the sole support of their families. They suffered from headaches, weakness, nervous indigestion. When rumors spread that there might be further lay-offs, physical complaints rose proportionately and the hospital was kept busy.

The executives in training could be given several true cases as illustrations of how such psychological protests manifest themselves.

Down in the tube room was a quiet girl in a dull, monotonous job. As the carriers thundered down, she would reach up to catch and transfer them, a duty more automatic than that of a telephone operator who at least constantly speaks to people. One day this girl had what seemed to be an epileptic spell. She recovered quickly, but the spells became more frequent, until it was doubted whether she could continue in her work. Yet the doctors in the store's hospital could find no actual symptoms of epilepsy. They finally sent the girl to the Conference Office for study. The interviewer

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soon learned the appalling circumstances of this girl's life. She was only nineteen, yet her petty salary was the only means of support for a family of five adults. All day she sat amid the thundering tubes, her thoughts distracted by fears that she might be relegated to part-time work, which would mean that her small salary would be cut. The work itself did not interest her. Her post at the tubes was found to be directly over the engine room, where she was subjected to constant vibration as well as to the noise in her ears. She was forced to deny herself lunch, to save money. All this was too much for her to bear. The seizures resembling epilepsy resulted, and when her circumstances were called to the attention of the store's social welfare agency and alleviated, the recurrent spells ceased altogether. Yet an organization with a policy less understanding would have simply dismissed this girl as unemployable.

Maria Stella, a pretty, dark Italian girl, a packer in the sub-basement, suddenly fainted while at her job. She was a healthy, vivacious person and no one in her department was much alarmed. But a few days later she fainted again, and this was followed a little while afterward by an hysterical outburst at a delivery boy. The hospital found Maria in a highly nervous condition and referred her to the Conference Office. Maria's record was a satisfactory one; she was rated as conscientious, not afraid of hard work; her pace was steady and fast; her output was comparatively free of errors. A few months previously she had asked to be transferred to an upper selling floor, but this request had been denied for some reason and Maria had apparently accepted the rejection. When asked why she had wanted to be transferred, she replied simply that she wanted to be where she could see



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more people. A little questioning brought out that Maria's home life was one of family illness and poverty. Her hours at the store gave her no opportunity to go out and meet friends, and she had even been forced to give up the Catholic church work that had once taken up her spare time. Maria was an active, out-going sort of girl, and her work conditions intensified her feeling that she was being thwarted. A spirit of protest mounted in her until she could stand it no longer, and without knowing why, she fainted or became hysterical.

The personnel interviewer felt that Maria herself had suggested the best solution. She should be assigned to an upper floor and perhaps given work as a merchandise checker where she would circulate among the different departments and mingle with people. Her hours would be more normal. Given this outlet, Maria would revert to more natural composure. The advantage of having executives who were trained to a personnel point of view was implied here. For Maria's supervisor was a Mr. Prior; he refused to listen to this logical explanation of the girl's strange behavior, and even when he admitted it, he was deeply convinced that Maria should not be "rewarded" for her fainting by being allowed to get her way. The personnel department was forced to bring much pressure to bear before Maria's salvation could be accomplished.

## MORALE

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ONCE morale was a word intended to describe the spirit of men engaged in the dangerous enterprises of war and adventure. Today we have come to think of it ever more in relation to the greater and still dangerous adventure in living that is industry. The smoke from factory chimneys is more heroic than smoke from the cannon's mouth.

The confidence and zeal of men working together to earn their living is what we mean by morale. Essentially men do not have that confidence and zeal unless they have security and satisfaction on the job, but something more than a basic security and satisfaction is implied. If men work together, they have in addition to their individual confidence and spirit, a group spirit that is new and apart. They need to have their individual success but also to share their group success. They borrow prestige from the size and renown of their enterprise.

Our modern civilization offers men new objects for pride to replace the smaller satisfactions of craftsmanship. One great builder relates the story of an Italian woman immigrant leading her son by the hand to gaze at a huge skyscraper and exhorting him: "Look at it, Tony! Your old man built that."

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She spoke truly, continues the builder, because the humblest hod-carrier had contributed to the skyscraper's beauty and magnificence.

Yet size, height, world-famed financial success, are not the sole accomplishments that inspire men working in groups. Smaller enterprises, if successful on their own scale, and simple jobs well done, also bring their rewards; and many modest men prefer them because such accomplishments remain more personal and hence are even more satisfying.

In her novel, *Oil for the Lamps of China*, Alice Tisdale Hobart has given us the picture of a man who was almost selfless in his devotion to the company for which he worked, because he was able to identify the progress of his company with the world's slow but steady progress and enlightenment. He saw in his contribution to the industrial world something more than a mere effort to earn a living; he was a servant to the world's advance as much as any scientist or statesman. In a large telegraph organization, a personnel worker noticed a young man performing a monotonous task lost in a maze of routine, without his enthusiasm for his job ever faltering. He did nothing but fold and route thousands of messages. "Do you find your work interesting?" the personnel worker asked, hiding his incredulity. "Yes," replied the young man, "because I have a vision of what lies beyond my small part in this great system of communication. Sometimes I stop to think where all these telegrams come from and where they are going, and the fateful words they carry, and how I help them on their way, defying time and space. You would not call my work exactly dull?"

The oil salesman pioneering in Asia, and the imaginative young man in the telegraph company, are probably excep-

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tional. Yet the same feelings could and should be shared by the telephone operator who connects the fine blue-corded wires with their nervous electric impulses that carry the human voice, or the bookkeeper whose machine adds with an inexorable accuracy that belittles the human mind. Industry today is a world of marvels, and though it is eloquently claimed that those mechanical marvels reduce the average man's task to a deadening monotony, to a place in an assembly line along a conveyor belt, a man could be shown reasons for pride as he tightens the bolt that is one of so many in the combustible chamber of an automobile, yet an essential part of the machine. He might well say to himself, "If I do not tighten this bolt, the machine will not go. I am important." Just as important is the shipping clerk, because if the package is misaddressed, the seasonable merchandise may be so greatly delayed that the earlier efforts of the manufacturer and salesman have been in vain.

It was different in the old days with the cobbler's pair of shoes. Only his neighbor and himself were involved in the sale. The size and complexity of modern business has not reduced the little men so much as it has made them important. When a few hundred men in Flint refused to work, it was not long before one hundred and thirty-five thousand other men were forced to stand idle. They needed the automobile parts that only those few hundred men could supply.

Perhaps industrial morale was never so much in the minds of business men as now. Higher morale may result from a recognition, on the part of workers, of their new importance, but the employer may also translate the essential rôle played by every workman as an evidence of his own vulnerability. The question is whether the worker will express his impor-

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tance by identifying himself with an organization or by opposing it. The answer lies in what use is made of morale. What is called for is imaginative and informed leadership. The dynamos, the machines, are still the lesser part of industry. Personality is even more dynamic. Men working together engender an electricity of their own.

The group repeats and enforces the patterns of the individual; the same demands, for approval, for security, are voiced. And just as the individual is complex and ever varied, making any single formula useless, so are groups complex and no two alike, each composed of people as different as Miss Katz and quiet Jean Coles, the versatile Alice, the well-bred Mary Smith; John Gordon, Mr. Prior, Miss Kelly and Miss Kirtland and Mr. Stone.

The problems of morale thus begin with hiring. Possibly Mary Smith, if accepted for the secretarial job in Miss Katz's office, would have survived her superior's envy without too much psychological discomfort; but the thought in the hiring interviewer's mind was not only of what the job would mean to Mary Smith personally, but also the effect of her presence on the morale of the office. He did not want to encourage a hidden conflict. That concealed conflict would have hindered the performance of the whole office almost as much as some hidden "personality conflict" might hinder an individual worker. We have seen how morale was affected in those departments that were staffed with too many aggressive and competing young men, and in those where there were too many discontented people of almost equal abilities, all of them perhaps too good for their jobs. A more complete portrait of what factors determine morale might be drawn by

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reference to yet another department, whose scene was not a store but a small manufacturing plant.

The friction and petty quarrelling that manifested itself in the sewing department of this small manufacturing plant was an old story. The plant was three floors and employed mostly men, but there were several groups of girls. On the whole, the girls got along well amongst themselves, especially those on the third floor, where they occupied most of the space; but the sewing department, crowded into a corner of the second floor, was a source of constant trouble. The men who worked on the same floor were much amused by this chronic, feminine bickering—it flattered their sense of masculine superiority—but the plant's owners were not, because the discontent was symptomatic of a disintegrated morale that had existed so long that they were at a loss to put a finger on its cause. Many of the girls in the sewing department had years of service, and all of them were capable workers, but the antagonism among them interfered with their steady performance, and the condition grew worse year after year. The employers did not know whether to resign themselves to acceptance of this as inevitable when girls of rather poor social class and education were brought together, or simply to "clean out" the department.

What should be done? The plant's owners issued threats for a time, and then adopted an attitude of ignoring the department as long as the work came out properly. They were naturally reluctant to dismiss old employes, and indeed they could not learn where the blame should be placed, because there were so many recriminations. To hear these, Mr. Mario, the floor superintendent, was given full responsibility, and the girls' own supervisor, Mrs. Cantiglione, was ordered to

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report to him periodically. Mr. Mario's intervention did not help matters. Mrs. Cantiglione was a rather ineffectual woman, whose confidence in her supervisory powers was undermined by the many years of wrangling in her group, and the floor superintendent was accustomed to waving aside her weak protests and opinions. The girls often came to him directly or appealed to him over Mrs. Cantiglione's head. He bore with them very well for a while, since he was a mature person, but finally the morale in the sewing department became so bad that even the floor superintendent lost patience and appealed to his employers.

His employers sympathized with exasperated Mr. Mario. They favored his suggestion that Mrs. Cantiglione should be replaced by a new supervisor whose personality and discipline would be stronger and who could assume sole responsibility for the girls. But when they summoned Mrs. Cantiglione for an interview, she wept and reminded them of her long years of service, and they relented. Mr. Mario was called back. He adamantly refused to let the moment pass without something definite being done, and the owners compromised with him by agreeing to hire a personnel expert who should make a survey of the sewing department.

The girls were considerably flustered and nervous when the expert arrived and began his interviews. But though they were jumpy, in anticipation that dismissals might result from these interviews, an improvement in the department's morale was immediately noticed. This was partly because the personnel expert's tone in the interviews was reassuring, so that each girl felt that if someone were let go, she would not be the one, and the department as a whole was flattered by the attention it was receiving. There was also a salutary release

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of suppressed feeling. All the old envies and causes of bickering were reiterated and expressed openly, in an endless outpouring of complaints to the smiling personnel expert, and many of them, once brought to light, somehow faded to insignificance, much to the girls' astonishment. One by one they had their turn; the personnel interviewer learned something about each of them.

The consequence was that the plant's owners were soon shown that much of the antagonism arose from conflicts of personalities and from home conditions that could scarcely be measured by superficial observation in the plant itself. Yet these things did not lie beyond the province of the employers, since it was on the job that these personal animuses made themselves manifest, and it was to the employers' own interest to correct or ameliorate them as far as possible. At any rate, they needed to understand them.

There were nine women in the department, and six of them comprised the "old girls," those whose employment was of long standing. The tearful supervisor, Mrs. Cantiglione, was the oldest of these. She was fifty-eight, a neat, elderly, unimaginative woman of Italian and Irish descent. Mrs. Cantiglione had married at seventeen; her tubercular husband had left her with two daughters to support. Her children had grown, married, and now had children of their own, but their husbands were sporadically employed and she still helped to support all of them. One could readily see why Mrs. Cantiglione, after a lifetime of toil, and with such heavy financial burdens, was not an emotionally composed person and should feel increasingly insecure and threatened as difficulties in her department continued to pile up.

The next oldest, in point of service, was Miss Bowen. Miss



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Bowen was thirty-seven, a tense, dried-up person, who lived with a married sister and described herself as a "happy old maid." Actually Miss Bowen was not happy at all, for her relations with her sister's family satisfied her in only a vicarious way, and the one thing literally her own was her job. She contributed a generous share of her salary to her sister's home, and thus her job was her only means of winning her relatives' recognition; and since she held only a secondary place in their home, she had to strive for a place of first importance in her work. This prompted her to set herself up as Mrs. Cantiglione's rival, and the fierce jealousy between the two women, both a long time in the department, and both so dependent upon their jobs, was one basis of the continual discontent.

Then there was Mrs. Gunn, who was Miss Bowen's ally against the supervisor. She was a widow whose only child had died of meningitis at eleven after an excruciating illness of ten weeks, and whose mother had died only two days later. She too lived with an unemployed sister and bore a double financial burden. She had no friends or interests outside her home; she was sour but wary, with a sharp tongue and an aloof manner that intimidated the other women. She expected the worst from everyone and distrusted people and their sympathy. Obviously her rebellious but defensive attitude toward all authority arose from her difficult, unhappy life. She was delighted to side with Miss Bowen in her quarrel with the supervisor.

Mrs. Gunn was really a center of conflict, because she said little but was a ready listener. The struggle between Mrs. Cantiglione and Miss Bowen was only one of those motivating the embattled department. Mrs. Gunn also took sides in

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another personal antagonism that had arisen between two other women, Mrs. Reilly and Mrs. Muller. She showed her sympathy by lunching daily with Mrs. Reilly, whose married name was Irish, but who was an ambitious divorcee with two children whom she had raised without help; her secret desire was to open her own dressmaking shop in Brooklyn. Mrs. Reilly was reputed to be popular and "fast" and to have "lots of boy friends." Her manner was direct, bristly, and a little hard. She sensed that the other women gossiped about her; she was embittered by what she felt were their conventional advantages over her. She protected herself by her quick-tempered, bullying behavior and a readiness to assert her "rights." Her fellow-workers feared her, and especially Mrs. Muller.

Mrs. Muller, the fourth oldest in point of service in the department, was Austrian. She had come to America when she was twelve, had first worked as maid and seamstress in a wealthy brewer's family, and then married at sixteen, after one week's acquaintance, a man so much older than herself that he was like a father to her. The man had two years of college and was expected to "go far," but had not made good. Mrs. Muller had an operation in an effort to have children, but never had any. She now had a dog and a bird to which she devoted herself. A highly nervous, unstable person, still childish, she had little purposeful outlet for her energy and dissipated it in gossip, quick friendships and enmities. This ill-fitted her for a place in a small group, as she liked excitement and sought the center of the stage. Her gossip and bragging were not intentionally malicious, and she had not meant to offend Mrs. Reilly, but the other women had resented Mrs. Muller's talkative habit of put-

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ting in her word on every subject. A chance remark had started the long quarrel, because Mrs. Reilly was as unfor-giving as Mrs. Muller was timorous.

Fortunately for Mrs. Muller, she had an ally in young Miss Levy, a pretty, dark Jewess whose past had been one of many disappointments. Miss Levy spoke with wistful emotion of her childhood; she felt disillusioned in her parents. She had studied sewing in a trade school, because she loved sewing and preferred it to business, but afterwards she had saved money to take up music under Frank Damrosch and had later sung for four years with the Metropolitan Opera Chorus. She still had hopes of returning to music. Miss Levy confessed that she was "not a good mixer." She was introspective and preoccupied with her health. She suffered with "nervous stomach" and trouble with her throat, which had forced her to abandon singing, and at home she often gave way to hysterical weeping. On the job she was moody and liked to dramatize herself and was quick to retort to fancied in-justices or slights. This led to occasional flare-ups and her alignment with Mrs. Muller against the bullying Mrs. Reilly.

The third quarrel in the group was that between the "old" girls and the newcomers, three in number; the old girls feared that the new girls would show them up by better and faster work. All these factions interacted and fluctuated in intensity from time to time, but they were constantly present.

Although Mrs. Cantiglione could not be blamed for these personality conflicts, her failure to keep discipline gave the bickering girls an additional license. Pressed by the disap-pointments of her own life and her fear that she might be ousted by Miss Bowen, she was cold and brusque in manner. She never praised good work. The girls disliked her, but

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did prefer her to Miss Bowen, whom all regarded as next in line for the supervisorship. They paid little attention to Mrs. Cantiglione's pronouncements and fought out among themselves such small questions as relief periods, each forever on the alert not to be imposed upon or outdone by the others; and when they could not agree, they ignored Mrs. Cantiglione by an appeal to the indifferent Mr. Mario. Furthermore, they did not listen to Mrs. Cantiglione's indiscriminate criticism of their work, and much work that was slipshod got by the harassed supervisor's inspection, only to be returned, which irritated Mrs. Cantiglione and lessened the girls' respect for her. Mr. Mario's indifference was a mask for the annoyance and weariness he felt toward them. The origins of the perpetual discord were beyond his comprehension, and equally beyond his scope. But his interference, at the well-intentioned but mistaken suggestion of his employers, did further harm. The girls were insecure. He was impatient in giving instructions to Mrs. Cantiglione, and so their tasks were inadequately explained to them. They felt that neither their supervisor nor Mr. Mario was interested in them or their problems, while their employers pointedly ignored them. They could not depend upon a sympathetic hearing from Mrs. Cantiglione, and had no confidence that as the link between them and their employers she was an effective interpreter, or one whose word would carry any weight. It rankled that the other girls, on the floor above, had been given a blanket raise, while they were passed over; they were "stuck off in a corner," laughed at by the men who shared the floor with them; they knew that the sewing department had an unenviable reputation and was held in low esteem. They shared none of the prestige of the firm, and

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certainly had no sense of participation. Most of them had financial worries, which added to their insecurity.

To a lesser extent, working conditions also contributed to unrest within the group. The workroom was bare and patched, and was at one corner in the rear with a poor outlook. The one window was in an alcove, and there was complaint about drafts when window and door were both open, and stuffiness when closed. The room was cramped. Some of the machines were so close that if a girl moved her chair suddenly backwards it might strike the material in the machine behind, throwing the material off the guide and necessitating resewing. There was only one washbasin, and since the work involved the handling of light colored stock and required clean hands, there was a steady stream of people coming in and out of the room, an irksome intrusion. Any operator getting supplies (which were kept in a closet in the same room), had to stand out of the way and close drawers or doors to leave open a passageway to the washbasin. To go from machine to supplies, a girl had to worm her way among the other machines, an ironing board and big waste boxes.

Finally, the work itself was complicated and "nerve-racking." The material was heavy and stiff and awkward to handle. The sewing demanded concentration and ingenuity and produced a physical tension that was an irritant where nerves were already on edge. The girls were underpaid, the trouble in the department having caused them to be passed by several times when raises were given to others. They were convinced that the difficulty of their work was not appreciated and often they hurried and were careless in an effort to speed up their volume, lest they might seem to lag too far behind the girls on the floor above, whose work was

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easier. This was another sign that they felt insecure. The work was not well organized and there was much needless overtime and omission of relief periods.

Yet the personnel expert recognized that the girls were good, steady workers, adjusted to the reality of work and held no grudge against being asked to stay long hours. They all had skill, and those of foreign birth particularly had an artisan's respect for craftsmanship carried over from their European background. They were eager for approval; they liked Mr. Mario. Most of them liked their employers and could be encouraged to feel themselves working with the organization as a united group. Although some of the girls were troublemakers, none was irretrievably a danger to the unit, if properly handled.

The department was moved to the floor above, although this location was not as strategic; yet the slight inconvenience was deemed justified in view of the objective. They were placed nearer the front windows, where the light was better and the outlook more pleasant; they also had more space. The whole third floor, occupied by women, was painted white. The girls of the sewing department were encouraged to mingle with the other women and this somewhat enlarged the narrow confines of the group. The new floor superintendent was a woman, but unlike Mr. Mario, she refused to hear any complaints from the girls or overrule their leader. All authority was returned to Mrs. Cantiglione, who thus felt almost as though she had received a promotion. This naturally increased the girls' respect for her. The work was reorganized after careful job analysis. At the same time, Mrs. Cantiglione was instructed in better understanding and

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handling of her workers, especially in ways to give approval and constructive criticism. Her manner was less brusque than before, her authority more certain; besides, there was rapidly a less urgent need for strict discipline. The girls realized now that Mrs. Cantiglione's reports were accepted by her employers and that she was more fair in her attitude toward them. The best proof of this was the long-delayed salary increases, which the employers in their interviews attributed to Mrs. Cantiglione's recommendations. A sense of security returned.

It cannot be said that Mrs. Cantiglione ever became a truly effective supervisor, and were the plant a larger one, a far better solution would have been her transference to different work in another department. Similarly, in a smaller plant than this, where there were not the same opportunities presented for a shift in the department's location, or the need for improvement of working conditions, whose remedy would be so beneficial to morale, Mrs. Cantiglione's dismissal might have been mandatory. But in this instance she was saved by consideration of her long years of service and by the fortunate chance that her leadership could be sufficiently strengthened and her department's morale invigorated by a few simple changes. These changes had their effect on all the girls.

Mrs. Reilly and Mrs. Muller were no longer so concerned with each other. Miss Bowen's envy of her superior was partly deflected by the possibility that she might sooner win herself a supervisory position in some other department on the floor. Her work-world was no longer limited to four walls, with a hostile masculine contingent beyond them.

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All this was not done in a week nor without a minimum of expense. But the eventual difference in morale was marked.

In the majority of business houses where bad morale prevails, the answer is often to be found in inadequate supervision. Often the men at the top are enlightened, but fail to appreciate the inadequacy of the minor supervisors under them. Here the "straw boss" enters and does almost irreparable harm. The morale of the average worker is not determined by the men at the head of his organization, whom he seldom meets, but by his daily contact with his immediate superior. Mr. Prior's workers do not like their firm because for them the firm is Mr. Prior; they must bear with his tantrums eight hours every day. They do not enjoy their work, and from their growing antagonism an outburst of trouble most likely results. No personnel policy truly prevails where the petty "straw boss" still flourishes, exercising his peevish whims, distorting the good intentions of his employers to his own selfish benefit. A personnel policy rests on the quality of its minor supervisors, those who continually transmit to their people the employers' decisions and desires. That is why the supervisor, even more than the average worker, must be well chosen and well trained. Indeed, in the care shown in his selection and training, the personnel policy of an organization is most definitely expressed.

What else contributes to good morale?

In many ways dealing with the group is easier than treatment of individual cases. This is because the group is usually more "normal" or "typical" in its reactions than any one individual.



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The group, as we have seen, shows the need and response to attention. Several years ago an interesting experiment was carried on at the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company. The test was originally designed to observe physical working conditions and reach conclusions from them along the lines laid down by the investigators. But the experimenters noted a continual improvement in the performance of the operators beyond what had been expected from the physical installation. The happy change in attitude toward work and the working environment, with an increase in efficiency, was attributed to a betterment of morale. The tests showed that once the habit of satisfaction was established among workers, the resultant higher morale continued even without some of the material benefits, such as rest-pauses, air-conditioning and the like, which had been tried during various phases of the experiment. Instead, even before the experiment had gone very far, the general attitude throughout the plant was much better. This was probably due in large part to the employees' feeling that their concerns and satisfaction were receiving attention. Their "bosses" were interested in them, and they reciprocated by being more interested in their work. The same phenomenon was observed in our sewing department.

An honest rating system and periodic salary review do much to relieve tension and guarantee workers the therapeutic benefit of "talking things out."

Strict and clearly understood standards of performance will help. Some executives, generous and genial, view their departments through the prism of their own good-humor and accept slipshod work uncritically. The really conscientious workers in their employ are discouraged in an atmosphere where slackers flourish equally. Strict standards of per-

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formance are a general boon, providing the strictness is leavened with open acknowledgment of the high level set. Then accomplishment is accompanied by a group pride that makes for excellent morale.

"Who punishes one threatens a hundred," say the French wisely. Morale is poorest where dismissals may descend without warning or the threatened employe has no assurance of fair and impartial consideration.

Morale is likely to be high where workers own stock in their company and perhaps have group life and health insurance plans, or mutual sick benefit clubs. The morale of the static worker also is maintained when he finds other interests that are somehow encouraged by his employers and identified by him with his work. This makes him feel that he participates more than ever in the organization's prestige and he has less desire to seek prestige elsewhere, perhaps in subversion, or substitutes for prestige, in bickering and complaints.

Morale ebbs when there are executives who quarrel among themselves, so that whole departments are ranged in opposition and inner dissension prevails.

Again, here is low morale: Salesmen are forced into monthly contests for the highest totals. They are under too constant pressure. They are prodded by insecurity, not self-belief or belief in their merchandise; they regard their fellow-salesmen as threats and the employer as an enemy. On the other hand, what is true for the individual may not be true for the group. Departments enter contests for the best sales or production totals of the month; the winning contestants anticipate an actual reward, which lets them feel that their enthusiasm is not merely being exploited. Here the contest

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is not so clearly an individual threat. The members of each department gladly join together in the common effort.

The group may have a strength that is more than the mere sum of each member's strength, just as the bundle of sticks cannot be broken. That is what makes morale uniquely valuable.

This approach to personnel problems is not a sentimental one. The employer knows that it can be translated into dollars and cents. During the past few years there has been a transition from European ideas, as represented by the Taylor Society and other publications, which emphasized the individual but more as a physical entity that needs care like a machine. The transition is toward perception that machines differ from humans, in that humans have emotions. The new theory suggests that it is the emotional factor in human beings which makes for the greatest variation in success and failure. The emphasis has not been on those other aspects of personnel work, such as social welfare, betterment of rest rooms, ventilation and physical working conditions, which are in essence a practical philanthropy and often a source of more real satisfaction and pride to the owners of an industry than to the workers.

The search goes deeper, to an appreciation that workers must find in their jobs security and recognition, that they must feel themselves reasonably safe and reasonably important, and that they need initial training and sympathetic guidance to achieve this. That guidance, in most instances, must come from minor supervisors who must themselves feel secure and proud and who must be brought to a more sensitive understanding of the emotional hopes, fears, conflicts and satisfactions of those under them. That atmosphere of mutual trust

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and pleasure in work is well worth any investment. It pays dividends in reduced personnel turnover, higher efficiency, and fewer labor troubles.

Does it seem callous to discuss human needs in terms of cash return? Perhaps a greater callousness would be betrayed in a merely sentimental appeal when this very practical one offers itself. The happy thing for the employer is that human nature can be made to be most productive by his helping others to realize their abilities to the utmost, whereby both he and they benefit.



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